

The Art Songs and Folk Arrangements of Jacqueline B. Hairston
Proposed for Presentation at the 2018 National NATS Conference, Las Vegas, Nevada

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The Art Songs and Folk Arrangements of Jacqueline B. Hairston is a sub-lecture recital program based on my soon to be published book/anthology/CD – *And So We Sing: the Arrangements of Spirituals by Jacqueline Butler Hairston* (CD, *Songs of the Soul and Spirit: The Spiritual Arrangements of Jacqueline B. Hairston*). It is from my broader program on the compositions of African American female composers – *The Arts Songs and Arrangements (Spirituals) of 20th Century African American Female Composers: Florence Price, Margaret Bonds, Camille Lucie Nickerson, Undine Smith Moore, Jacqueline Butler Hairston, Rosephanye Dunn Powell, Dorothy Rudd Moore, Diane White, Lela McLin, and Betty Jackson King*. The book, of two volumes, focuses on the *performance practice* of Hairston's arrangements of spirituals and original art songs, respectively. It is rare that we, as artists, have the opportunity to work closely with a composer to gain their perspective of *their* work. Having had this opportunity since 2003, I feel it important and necessary to bring this presentation of performance practice to the artists and teachers of the broader NATS community, and to the world.

The lecture performance addresses the musical elements of form, rhythm, melody, harmony, and all important to song—the poetry. The main body of my research consists of four main components: 1) general classifications of music; 2) the origins of the spiritual and the evolution of music by African Americans with its subsequent major forms; 3) a biographical sketch of the selected composers; and 4) the study of the song literature of each composer, which culminates in a list of distinctive characteristics that serve to assist a listener in distinguishing one composer from the other. Where possible and relevant for inclusion, influences (historical/cultural/musical, European), the Harlem Renaissance, the work of other composers and/or style periods and genres of previous eras are included for comparative purposes.

The NATS presentation and performance will consist of the following: Hairston's treatment of the elements of form, rhythm, melody, and harmony; the origins and evolution of the spiritual and African American music/song literature and its subsequent major forms; a biographical sketch of Hairston, inclusive of what brought her to the *spiritual*; her musical language and style; and her personal preferences in the performance of her creations. The program features a select number of Hairston's arrangements for performance, contrast, and discussion of performance practice. The audience will be engaged in some demonstration and singing. Attention is given to her accompaniments as well, which is key to enhanced collaboration between singer and pianist.

The general survey of the song literature that is encompassed in my research—art songs and folk literature (arrangements of spirituals)—of selected 20th Century African American women composers—has as its purpose to provide a general overview and sampling of the work of the composers and is a celebration of their accomplishments and contributions to the society of music and to our society and culture at large; it purposes to build an awareness to the academy of music and also the general public of the immense contributions they have made to the body of song, i.e., vocal literature with the hope that they will no longer be overlooked. The full gamut

of research includes the literature of Florence Price, Margaret Bonds, Camille Lucie Nickerson, Undine Smith Moore, Jacqueline Butler Hairston, Rosephanye Dunn Powell, Lela McLin, Betty Jackson King, Dorothy Rudd Moore, Diane White, and others, as it is an organic endeavor; it is also inclusive of male composers. Attention is given to their distinctive style characteristics, with consideration to the origins, elements and idiomatic forms of African music, and other factors of music or persons that may have influenced them or may be unique to their style of composition. The lecture is interspersed with song performance/demonstration.

The impetus for this research stems from my involvement with higher education for almost 30 years (on the professor end), and all of my academic life otherwise, where I have seen the general focus of vocal literature and music history courses concentrating on the works of Anglo-Saxon European composers. I've learned that many or most of our theory professors and singers do not know the names of the composers mentioned above, nor the names of other masterful and internationally recognized composers of color – outside of William Grant Still. And even with him, there is argument of his legitimacy and worthiness to stand against other composers of European and American descent. Our students are not getting the full story. It was time to confront this and put an end to the illiteracy of our academic programs and of our students and future teachers of singing, choral directors, and musicians. In addition to and in keeping with the lecture recital series, I have also created a new course, which is the first of its nature to be introduced and taught in the state of Mississippi – *The Evolution of Music by Black Americans* with sub courses in vocal literature. All are based upon the research of my lecture recital discussed earlier. This research has also lead me to the development of several outreach programs specifically arranged for K-12 school children that have been particularly fruitful.

The current program for the NATS Convention is generally performed with Jacqueline Hairston, as we have performed together in a number of major venues. However, for this presentation, I have the distinct privilege and honor of collaborating with my esteemed colleague, Dr. Lois Leventhal who has recently retired from *Southern Miss* and now resides in Boston, Massachusetts. Jacqueline Hairston has been deemed the “National Preserver of the Negro Spiritual” picking up where her cousin, “The Amen Man,” Jester Hairston, left off. Jacqueline Hairston and her arrangements of spirituals were showcased at Carnegie Hall in 2012 and 2016; I had the distinct honor of being one of her soloists for the 2012 concert and debut performance for which she wrote and premiered a special tribute to the artist legend, Jester Hairston. Hairston’s works have always been appealing to me; she uses a unique harmonic language and color not found in the arrangements of her peer composers. Being a vocal coach, she has a unique understanding of the voice and in the course of composing, knows the exact colors, effects and sounds she seeks and how to achieve them. This is rare and certainly a noteworthy attribute of her musical style. I am sure her arrangements and our program will be enjoyed by all.

SESSION ABSTRACT: "The Art Songs and Folk Arrangements of Jacqueline B. Hairston" is a sub-lecture recital program based on my soon to be published book/anthology/CD – "And So We Sing: the Arrangements of Spirituals by Jacqueline Butler Hairston." The book (two volumes) and this lecture focuses on the performance practice of Hairston’s art songs and arrangements. Both are from my broader work: "The Arts Songs and Arrangements (Spirituals) of 20th Century African American Female Composers." Having worked with Hairston since 2003, it is important to bring this presentation of performance practice to the artists and teachers of singing in the broader NATS community. The lecture addresses Hairston’s treatment of the elements of form, rhythm, melody, and harmony; the origins and evolution of the spiritual and African American music/song literature and its subsequent major forms; a biographical sketch of Hairston; her musical language/style; and her personal preferences in the performance of her creations.