



SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR

24 NEGRO MELODIES
Opus 59



David Shaffer-Gottschalk, *piano*

DISC 1

- Southeast Africa* ¹. At the Dawn of Day (*Loko ku ti ga*)
². The Stones are Very Hard (*Maribye ma noncha ngeffe*)
³. Take Nabandji (*Thata Nabandji*)
⁴. They Will Not Lend Me a Child (*Aba boleki nuwana!*)

- South Africa* ⁵. Song of Conquest (*Ringendje*)
⁶. Warriors' Song

West Africa ⁷. O Lo Ba

West Indies ⁸. The Bamboula (*African dance*)

- America* ⁹. The Angels Changed My Name ¹⁰. Deep River
¹¹. Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel? ¹². Don't Be Weary, Traveler

DISC 2

- America, Cont ...* ¹. Going Up ². I'm Troubled In Mind
³. I Was Way Down A-Yonder (*Dum-a-lum*)
⁴. Let Us Cheer the Weary Traveler ⁵. Many Thousand Gone
⁶. My Lord Delivered Daniel ⁷. Oh, He Raise a Poor Lazarus ⁸. Pilgrim's Song
⁹. Run, Mary, Run ¹⁰. Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child
¹¹. Steal Away ¹². Wade in the Water

was played to glowing reviews at its London premiere with the composer as conductor.

In addition to his musical training, influences on Coleridge-Taylor's compositions included his collaboration with African American poets and composers, most notably Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906) and Harry Thacker Burleigh (1866-1949). Coleridge-Taylor's celebrity status in the United States may be partly attributable to his friendship with Dunbar, which began around 1896. Another influence was the famed Fisk Jubilee Singers, which he first heard during their European tours in the 1890s. Shortly after his contact with the Fisk Singers, Negro spiritual/folk song melodies occur frequently in his work. He subsequently collected the traditional songs of Africans and African Americans from numerous sources.

Unlike other English late nineteenth century nationalist composers like Vaughan Williams, Coleridge-Taylor's "nationalism" was more ethnically guided. Early in life, he reportedly declared himself a "British musician with an English education" and was a devotee of Antonin Dvorák (1841-1904) by age 17. Near the end of his life, he wanted to be known as a "black musician [not a Creole]." This transformation is the substance of his most profound non-musical influence: the concept of pan-Africanism, of which he was an ardent proponent.

Coleridge-Taylor's pan-Africanism is embodied in his acceptance of the socio-political global movement which sought to unify and uplift native Africans as well as those of the African Diaspora. Within this movement,

Theoretical analysis of Coleridge-Taylor's music shows his use of form, harmony, texture, timbre, and continuity to be decidedly British. Aesthetically, his work exudes the grandeur and elegance thereof, and the *Twenty-four Negro Melodies, Opus 59*, are no exception. There is perhaps no clearer description of Coleridge-Taylor's intentions for these pieces than the words from his own Foreward to the *Twenty-four Negro Melodies*, published by the Oliver Ditson Company of Boston, Massachusetts (1905):

What Brahms has done for the Hungarian folk-music, Dvorák for the Bohemian, and Grieg for the Norwegian, I have tried to do for these Negro Melodies. The plan adopted has been almost without exception that of the Tema con Variazioni. The actual melody has in every case been inserted at the head of each piece as a motto. The music which follows is nothing more nor less than a series of variations built on said motto. Therefore my share in the matter can be clearly traced, and must not be confounded with any idea of "improving" the original material any more than Brahms' Variations on the Haydn Theme 'improved' that.

With regard to the provenances of the twenty-four melodies, sixteen are from the United States, seven are African tunes, and one is West Indian (although it is of African derivation). The twenty-four tunes appear to have come from eight main sources, although it is possible that Coleridge-Taylor

- “Take Nabadji (Thata Nabandji)” – from southeastern Africa
 - “They Will Not Lend Me a Child (A ba boleki nwana!)”
– from southeastern Africa
 - “Song of Conquest (Ringendjé)” – from southeastern Africa
 - “Warriors’ Song” – from South Africa
4. A melody given to Coleridge-Taylor by a family friend, Victoria Randall.
- “Oloba” – a pentatonic West African tune
5. The collection of Henry Edward Krehbiel (1854-1923), a historian. This collection was later published by the G. Schirmer Company (1914) in a volume entitled, *Afro-American Folk Songs; A Study in Racial and National Music*.
- “Bamboula” – a West Indian melody derived from an African dance
6. *Jubilee and Plantation Songs*, published by the Oliver Ditson Company (1887).
- “Many Thousand Gone”
 - “Going Up”
 - “My Lord Delivered Daniel”
 - “Run, Mary, Run”
7. *Cabin and Plantation Songs*, published by G. P. Putnam (1877).
- “Oh, He Raise a Poor Lazarus”

There are several general characteristics applicable to all of these pieces. First, there are extremely clear expository statements of the melody in each piece. Coleridge-Taylor's thematic emphasis is lucid in exposition, development, and transformation while capturing the plaintive, yearning essence that characterized his interpretation of the meanings and purposes of African and African American music in the quest for freedom. Second, there is pervasive use of octave doublings in virtually all of the pieces to punctuate and emphasize the harmonic fundament in the lower register. This device is also used to intensify passages, to achieve dramatic emphasis, and to increase volume and texture. Octaves are also used to emphasize restatements of the melody or melodic diminution. Transparent melodic development consistently emphasizes the tune so that it is readily recognizable in developmental or transformative passages. More esoteric devices such as palindrome or inversion are not used. One melodic enigma is the surprising license taken by Coleridge-Taylor in combining the original melody of "Oloba" with a West African drum call from his own collection, extending the opening theme of the piece by four measures. This is in direct contrast to his usual purist's approach to melodic exposition. Third, there is liberal use of chromaticism while preserving clear tonal centers. This is a product of the "theme and variations" approach to development and the harmonic tendencies of the period. Coleridge-Taylor employed linear and/or arpeggiated inner lines that define the harmonic center, support and respond to the melody, and sustain important tones as diminution. These inner lines fill out the texture, allowing the composer to elongate certain

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