



Tiger Butterfly Films

Chorus founder Diane Sare (shown) and music director John Sigerson conducted the chorus.

cal culture, such as the African-American Spiritual as developed, preserved, and performed by Roland Hayes, Sylvia Lee, Hall Johnson, Harry Burleigh, and Antonin Dvorak, to allow today's citizens "to stand on the rock where Moses"—and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—stood.

The Mission of Roland Hayes

Jan. 24—The following are excerpts from Roland Hayes' foreword to his book, My Songs: Aframerican Religious Folk Songs Arranged and Interpreted by Roland Hayes (1948).

I was born just twenty-four years after the Emancipation Proclamation. The atmosphere of the slave days was still strong at my place of birth and the religious folk songs of my people were being born out of religious experience at white heat. I have seen them being born in our religious services at the community Mount Zion Baptist Church at "Little Row" (now Curryville), Gordon County, Georgia. Here I heard great ritual sermons preached and prayers prayed, and I

sang the Aframerican religious folk songs as a child with my parents and the church folk. Later, I was for four years a music special student at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and I acquired additions to the knowledge I already had of our folk songs from their pioneer collections.

In London and Paris, where I lived for twelve years, I made my home with some highly intelligent native Africans, most from the West Coast of Africa, who were making university studies under government auspices. Discussions of the music of African peoples in Africa and Aframerican folk music were mutually enlightening. Aframerican folk songs, forgotten since childhood,

sprang to my lips, and to my astonishment my native African audience joined in the music while expressing what they felt in their own language idiom. This pointed out to me the African characteristics in Aframerican folk songs, and in the heat of discovery the dross was separated from pure metal, to borrow a figure from the iron foundry in Chattanooga where I worked as a youth.

Eventually, I obtained recordings of African music, and a collection of musical instruments used in them, which I learned to manipulate well enough to understand them. From my African friends in London, and later from African visitors to my home, I learned how instrumental effects are sometimes implied in the vocal characteristics of the older Aframerican folk songs. These and other studies I have drawn upon in some of my accompaniments.

The term "Negro" is a misnomer when taken to mean that in anything but color the slaves within the borders of the various Southern states, or the various plantations—or even anywhere—were of one universal type. But for those Africans who were transplanted to the United States the term "Aframerican" seems fitting.

In the same work, he began his introduction to his Life of Christ cycle as follows.

The salvation of man is always the great theme of masterworks in literature and art. Biblical material follows like a red thread in mankind's art works through

the ages. No story appeals to man's finer creative vision as does the life of Christ. The early Christian chants, the masses of Palestrina, the passions, oratorios, masses of Bach, Handel, Beethoven—among many others—are the musical panorama of the mute majesty of the life of God on earth. With never diminishing radiance, to every succeeding generation of humanity this panorama gives life, spiritual consciousness, to each in his own measures. It is small wonder that in his turn the Aframerican should find in his musical portraying of the life of Christ, his most effective utterance. A social condition of the most abject humility could not help but find complete identity in a life of love, compassion, and patience.

'Unity Concert' Program

The Tablet, *the newspaper of the Brooklyn Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, published the following notice on Jan. 11, under the title, "Co-Cathedral to Host Unity Concert Honoring Dr. King."*

The Foundation for the Revival of Classical Culture and the Schiller Institute will conduct a "Unity Concert" entitled "Strength to Love" to commemorate the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Jan. 15, at 4 p.m. at St. Joseph's Co-Cathedral, Prospect Heights.

"In this time of division in our country, a certain trumpet for unity should be sounded. The language of music is an excellent way to sound that trumpet," said Lynne Speed, of The Schiller Institute.

The concert will feature the "Life of Christ" song cycle composed by Roland Hayes. The program will also include a soloist from the NYPD Ceremonial Unit singing "God Bless America," three African American spirituals and the "Amen" Chorus from Handel's *Messiah* (Dr. King's favorite piece), performed by the Schiller Institute NY Community Chorus.

Guest soloists will perform selections from works of Schubert, Bach and Verdi. Special guest artists include: Indira Mahajan, Everett Suttle, Reginald Bouknight, Frank Mathis, Gudrun Buhler, Elvira Green, and

Gregory Hopkins. Conductors are Diane Sare and John Sigerson, who conducted the historic Mozart *Requiem* at the Co-Cathedral of St. Joseph on the 15th anniversary commemoration of 9-11.

Music has long been at the center of the African-American struggle for freedom in the 17th- and 18th-century American colonies, as well as in the later United States. "Freedom songs" were not merely composed by African-Americans confined in slavery, but also by free churchmen associated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

Even before the founding of those churches in 1794 and 1821, respectively, African-American clergymen heading churches in Florida, Virginia, South Carolina, and elsewhere composed songs. Literacy training existed, including of slaves, as early as 1634 in Quebec, carried out by Jesuit instructors such as Paul Le Jeanne, and the 1640s in Pennsylvania, carried out by the Moravians. The use in the 1960s civil rights movement of "freedom songs" was a central weapon employed to "overcome them with our capacity to love," as King once stated.

"Public service through public action" was the most enduring lesson of Dr. King. Among his early associates, nearly all of whom were clergymen, there had been a debate—"Why are you always talking about the 'Social' gospel," and not the 'Gospel' gospel?" King was often criticized by other clergymen and church institutions.

When he was denounced as "an outside agitator" in Birmingham, Ala., in April of 1963, King, then incarcerated at Birmingham jail, responded, "I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their 'thus saith the Lord' far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid."

It is often forgotten that the King-associated civil rights movement was not a political movement. It was a religiously based crusade for human dignity and justice that was punctuated by non-violent direct action.