

**‘LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING’
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE MUSIC FROM BLACK AMERICANS**

“Little of beauty has America given the world save the rude grandeur God himself stamped on her bosom; the human spirit in this new world has expressed itself in vigor and ingenuity rather than in beauty. And so by fateful chance the Negro folk-song—the rhythmic cry of the slave—stands today not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side of the seas.” (William Edward Burghardt Dubois in: *The Social Implications of Early Negro Music in the United States*, Prologue p. xx)

Jon Michael Spencer in his *Blues And Evil* considers all of black music to be about the *truth* of empirical life for black *folks* in the U.S. with a regular critique of black spiritual life. This truth of an old music about the particular locus and condition of black people remains connected to a historic tradition wrenched from a remnant of Africa’s endowment to its missing children and bound to a drama created first in slavery, next by Jim and later by James Crow. While vocal skills and interpretations are a part, the emotion distress, rhythms and syncopations combine to permit an ever-present improvisational style to challenge all the controls that are in place.

<http://afgen.com/music.html>

The site contains some good information across the black music (black participation in European classical music is omitted) spectrum.

[African American Song](#) (Alexander Street Press) 

http://voyager.ship.edu/remote/validate.cgi?db=KUTZ_AAS A digital resource collection containing recordings by the top names in the history of black American music.

Black music biography: an annotated bibliography/ Samuel A Floyd, Jr. and Marsha J. Reisser. White Plains, N. Y.: Kraus International Publications, 1987. ML 128 B3F6 1987

An amazing collection of commentary and critique on scholarly biographical resources about 86 diverse black musicians with index and selected discographies for each entry. For each book discussed, the authors point out the strengths and flaws, the overlaps of careers and influences, interactions and relationships among these entertainers, common omission in the biographies of black musicians of references to potentially valuable written correspondence in the biographies even when the subjects (like Louis Armstrong) were avid letter writers.

The books of American Negro spirituals: including The book of American Negro Spirituals and The second book of Negro Spirituals/ James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson. New York: Viking Press, 1944. M 1670 J67B66 1944

A compilation in tribute to the ‘noble’ Spirituals, shouts song (which are in fact dances) and unknown black bards who created them—the Johnsons describe the Spirituals as in possession of dignity, naiveté, high and pure motives of the heart and being the finest distinctive artistic contribution the country has to offer the world even in the midst of disputes about the origins: in reference to the “miracle of its production, they offer: “The white people

among whom the slaves lived did not originate anything comparable even to the mere titles of the Spirituals [Introduction].”

Blues and evil/ Jon Michael Spencer. Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1993. ML 3512 S63 1993

Tellingly, the author discovered he was a bluesman while teaching at Duke University Divinity School, then left to teach about the blues in the Department of Popular Culture at Bowling Green University, and committed himself to filling a near void in the scholarship about the blues written by black academicians—thus appears this well documented and indexed treatise on the blues as ‘black sacred music’ presented here for its eros, its ethos, and its decline at the hands of ‘advancement’—urbanization, education, race pride and the press.

Chicago soul/ Robert Pruter. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1991. ML 3537 P78 1991

Chicago Soul is a rich and critically footnoted history of soul music’s evolution in the city from an already thriving blues and R&B industry, its decline, and its virtual disappearance in the early 1980s. Identified by the researcher as the first book on the subject it is meant “to rectify the neglect that Chicago *soul* [the ‘overall sound, quality and feeling’] of the music of black migrants from the South) has suffered over the years” and to recognize “the people of Chicago, mostly black, who created the vibrant thriving recording and related industries—the studios, the distributing, promoting, radio programs and radio disks-jockeying, soda pop advertising, and juke box manufacturing.

<http://chevalierdesaintgeorges.homestead.com/index.html> (or africlassical.com).

This one strictly concerns the contribution of blacks to European Classical music.

Goin’ to Kansas City/ Nathan W. Pearson, Jr. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1987. ML 3508.8 K37P4 1987

Here is an invaluable study and story of jazz musicians, their ‘Technicolor’ language, humor, trials, loves, regrets... told in their voices from the author’s interviews during an oral history project in one of the four major pre-WWII U.S. centers of jazz’s development (New Orleans, Chicago, and New York are the other three), with many of their photographs and broad sheets reproduced, a chronology, alphabetized brief biographies, discography, bibliography and index all suited to facilitate research.

A history of jazz in America/ by Barry Ulanov. New York: Da Capo Press, 1972. ML 3561 J3U5 1972

Readers can find a credible account of jazz’s beginning as an artistic (literary, visual, performing) movement circa 1909-1911 considered impudence, determined to surprise, brevity, syncopation, chaos, and Negro continuing into the ‘Jazz Age’ of the 1920s with mainstream interests for ‘pseudo’ or ‘synthetic’ jazzmen like Paul Whiteman and George Gershwin into the middle 1930s under the influence of the great depression and the ‘death’ of the swing era when a new jazz is born ‘hot’ with improvisation.

<http://www.jahsonic.com/BlackMusic.html>

Here black music around the world is stated to be the musical ‘rule’ rather than the exception with sponsorships described as: “a nobrow site for the loftiest of intellectuals and the most

jaded hedonists, exploring the hidden links between "mainstream" and "underground" in films, books and music.

The music of black Americans: a history/ [Eileen Southern](#). New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1971. ML 3556 S74 1971

A timeless well researched college text by Harvard's first black female tenured professor traces black American musical history from the chronicles of travelers into West African, to colonial psalm singing, the work and folksongs of the most musically prolific black boatmen, to the singing of slave work 'gangs,' ring shouts, forced singing on the auction block, minstrels, ragtime and brass bands, dance, swing, and club music, to the biographies of the pre-jazz era with the inclusion of chronologies, illustrations, music, a bibliography and discography of narrated notes, and an thorough index "to provide a solid and useful basis for discussion of the question of [the definition of Black American Music]."

The new Negroes and their music: the success of the Harlem Renaissance / Jon Michael Spencer. Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Pr., c1997. ML 3556 S77 1997

Noting the importance of an extended time frame for the Harlem Renaissance in assessing its ultimate success, Spencer argues for significance of the strategic musical accompaniment and support to the touted literary contributions of the renaissance and he brings music into the discussion by challenging its lack of serious consideration in the work of Nathan Huggins and David L. Lewis while emphasizing the "mastery of form" generally taking place during the period which results in "the vindication of the Negro."

The Oxford book of spirituals/ edited by Moses Hogan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. M 1670 O93 2002

A collection of scores "of enduring quality [that] still enrich the spirits of those who listen with the hear as well as the ear [Introduction]" by mostly black composers and arrangers—briefly introduced at the beginning of the text—who "brought a dimension of harmonic sophistication to the traditional melodic and lyric content that enabled new generations to experience the power contained in [the] songs [Introduction]." Includes among others *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, Ezekiel Saw de Wheel, If I got My Ticket, Can I Ride?, and Go Tell It On the Mountain.*

Rags and ragtime: a musical history/ David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichenor. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1978. ML 3530 J37 1989

Besides being an extensive compilation of rag tunes attached to performers' biographies arranged in a sequence of various ragtime styles, it is also the authors' narrative which diffuses the origins of this musical genre from a base inside black folk traditions to minstrels and the piano-based Tin Pan Alley. While recognizing origins at the pianos of lowly saloons in accompaniment to black singers and a clog dancing ('ragging', or making fun of...), the authors still consider ragtime a "racially ambiguous commodity" of "untrustworthy derivation."

Rap music and street consciousness/ Cheryl L. Keyes. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2002. ML 3531 K48 2002

This credible examination of Rap music as an ethnological music genre and subgenre, 'gansta rap,' informed by such traditions as the song-speech of griots and bards in West Africa, black preachers, black cheerleaders' chants, introduces the music as a distinct form

starting in the early 1970s and attempts “to capture the essence of the rap music tradition by examining its cultural sensibilities within its world of beats, rhymes, and street consciousness [Preface].

The social implications of early Negro music in the United States: with over 150 of the songs, many of them with their music/ edited with an introduction by Bernard Kats. New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969. ML 3556 K28

This book with an introduction, prologue, and three prefaces is at once a collection of more than 150 slave songs and an important factual commentary—anecdotal treasures of the black musical landscape—on the development, documentation, and exploitation of black American music, lyric, instrumentation, and instruments plaited with a depiction of the calculating unromantic role of the slave master and his slave institution to the music. It includes notes, bibliographies, and song index.

The Vibe history of hip hop/ edited by Alan Light. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999. ML 3531 V53 1999

The magazine credited with launching a culture that arose out of the Bronx’s break beat is central to this charter Vibe writer’s compilation of some rather comprehensive narratives (in discordant news-spread format) about the music, the truth, the mystery, the with a “significant and innovative culture-force with its rhythmic speech puzzles, vocal stresses, changeable pitch, boastful oratory, and sound processing called rap. A disc is included.

Voice of the Jazz Age: profiles of eight vintage jazzmen/ Chip Deffaa. Urbana Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1990. ML 395 D44 1990

Sam Wooding, Benny Waters, Bix Beiderbecke, Joe Tarto, Bud Freeman, Jimmy McPartland, Freddie Moore and Jabbo Smith are the welcomed musical profiles benefiting from an early more extended age/meaning of *jazz*, as these are performers with a range of musical perspectives, including the manifest commercialism of new developments in ragtime, or the jazzy big band sound, swing, or be-bop and from time to time ‘pure jazz.’

Wade in the water: the wisdom of the spirituals/ Arthur C. Jones. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, c1993. ML 3556 J72 1993

A Jungian psychologist and psychology professor invites a closer look at the spirituals from their historical beginnings to the present as a way to understand the human spirit in terms of a collective with infinite potential which is accessible in the songs—rhythms, melodies, and lyrics—traditionally presented by black Americans.

Way up north in Dixie: a black family’s claim to the Confederate anthem/ Howard L. Sacks and Judith Rose Sacks. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, c1993. ML 3556 S2 1993

The claim comes as a biographical account of the assimilation of a Knox County, Ohio black American family of literate farmers best known for their talents as composers, singers, dancers and instrumentalists who exchanged the fruits of their farm and their musical ability among their white neighbors--brothers, Ben and Lew Snowden are identified as having taught ‘Dixie’ to the white actor, Daniel Decatur Emmett, a pioneer of American blackface minstrelsy and the person credited with popularizing *Dixie* (i.e., *I Wish I Was in Dixie’s Land*)