

## Sorrow Songs

for oboe, bassoon and CD

1. "My grandfather belong to Thomas Jefferson"  
Fountain Hughes, Baltimore, MD (recorded 1949)
2. When the Yankees come through  
Alice Gaston, Gee's Band, AL (recorded 1941)
3. "buried in baptism"  
Irene Williams, Rome, MS (recorded 1940)

Brooke Joyce (2006, rev. 2012)

Commissioned and premiered by Susan Tomkiewicz (with Nathaniel Zeisler), 2007

Revised version premiered by Heather Armstrong and David Oyen, 2012

### Program note:

*Sorrow Songs* takes its title from W.E.B. Du Bois' work, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). The voices heard on the electronic component are taken from the Library of Congress' collection "Voices from the Days of Slavery: Former Slaves Tell Their Stories."

1. "My grandfather belong to Thomas Jefferson"  
Fountain Hughes, Baltimore, MD (recorded 1949)

My name is Fountain Hughes. I was born in Charlottesville, Virginia. My grandfather belong to Thomas Jefferson. My grandfather was a hundred and fifteen years old when he died. And now I am one hundred and, and one year old. . . . Well I'll tell you, uh. Things come to me in spells, you know. . . . I remember things, uh, more when I'm laying down than I do when I'm standing or when I'm walking around. . . . We didn't have no property. We didn't have no home. We had nowhere or nothing. We didn't have nothing only just, uh, like your cattle, we were just turned out. And uh, get along the best you could. Nobody to look after us. Well, we been slaves all our lives. My mother was a slave, my sisters was slaves, father was a slave. . . . I don't know, to tell you the truth when I think of it today, I don't know how I'm living. None, none of the rest of them that I know of is living. . . . I'm the oldest one that I know that's living. But, still, I'm thankful to the Lord. If I thought, had any idea, that I'd ever be a slave again, I'd take a gun and just end it all right away. Because you're nothing but a dog. You're not a thing but a dog.

2. When the Yankees come through  
Alice Gaston, Gee's Band, AL (recorded 1941)

I can remember when the Yankees come through...they carried my father away and carried my two sisters and one brother. And I can remember when my missus used to run in the garden, from the Yankees and tell us if they come, don't tell them where they at. And when they come and ask for them I told them I didn't know there they was, and they was in the woods. And uh, my old

missus was named Mrs. M., and the master was name Mr. Frank Irving. And the white folks all been treating me mighty nice every since they knowed me. An' they all treating me mighty nice, all the white folks that know me, they treats me nice. And if I want anything, I'll ask for it. I was taught in that a way by my old master. Don't steal, don't lie, and if you want anything, ask for it. Be honest in what you get. That was what I was raised up with. And I'm that a way today.

3. "buried in baptism"

Irene Williams, Rome, MS (recorded 1940)

Another very interesting thing in my early childhood was the Negro baptizing. All the candidates for baptism were standing on the bank of the pond over in Mr. Bailey's pasture. Dressed in long white gowns with white caps on their heads ready to be buried in baptism. And the song as they were being led into the water by the minister was this:

Oh, brother, keep your lamp a trimmed and a burning.

Keep your lamp a trimmed and a burning

Keep your lamp a trimmed and a burning.

Just like the light of God.

Oh, sister, keep your lamp a trimmed and a burning.

Keep your lamp a trimmed and a burning

Keep your lamp a trimmed and a burning.

Just like the light of God.

Oh, mourners, keep your lamp a trimmed and a burning.

Keep your lamp a trimmed and a burning

Keep your lamp a trimmed and a burning.

Just like the light of God.

Oh, sinners, keep your lamp a trimmed and a burning.

Keep your lamp a trimmed and a burning

Keep your lamp a trimmed and a burning.

Just like the light of God.

Technical needs:

CD player with stereo playback

monitors for performers (optional)

technician to start/stop CD