ROUTLEDGE HISTORIES

The Routledge History of

Social Protest in Popular Music

Edited by

JONATHAN C. FRIEDMAN

THE ROUTLEDGE HISTORY OF SOCIAL PROTEST IN POPULAR MUSIC

The Routledge History of Social Protest in Popular Music provides a sweeping overview of social protest music in a diverse collection of twenty-eight essays that analyze the trends, musical formats, and rhetorical devices that have been used in popular music to illuminate the human condition. Divided into three sections—Historical Beginnings, War, and Civil Rights; Contemporary Social Protest in Rock Music; and International Protest—these essays demonstrate the great diversity in the form and content of popular music as a means of social protest over time. The book traces social protest music's evolution from its origins in key points in American history to its changes due to the rise of rock music in the 20th century and concludes with a focus on specific modern examples of social protest music in countries around the world.

By comparing and contrasting musical offerings in a number of countries and contexts from the 19th century to today, *The Routledge History of Social Protest in Popular Music* is an ideal introduction to social protest in popular music for students and scholars in popular music studies, human rights studies, and the history and sociology of music.

Jonathan C. Friedman is Professor of History and Director of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at West Chester University.

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INTRODUCTION

What Is Social Protest Music? One Historian's Perspective

Jonathan C. Friedman

My parents tell the story that, sometime in 1969, when I was three years old, my grandparents took me shopping in Columbus, Ohio, and were mortified that, as we strolled down the aisles, I was singing at the top of my lungs the words from "Solidarity Forever" and Woody Guthrie's "Union Maid." These very sweet middle-American, Eisenhower Republicans (who today would have been regarded as socialists by many within the current Republican establishment), wondered what on earth my parents were teaching me. My father was hardly a leftie; he had just written an article on the problem of race for *The National Review*, and neither he nor my mother subscribed to the counter-culture. In fact, I don't think we even had a Beatles record in the house until I bought one in high school. Yet my parents loved folk music, and they owned a copy of the Almanac Singers' *Talking Union*, from 1941, which, along with other standard kids' fare from the time, I apparently devoured. The retention of such a song at the exclusion of newer protest music from the 1960s offered insight into my parents' "silent generation," and the song was perhaps the first glimpse into what would become (to my parents' dismay) a lifelong social commitment to "all-things-hippie" on my part.

Professionally, I followed in my father's footsteps and studied modern Jewish history and the Holocaust, eventually becoming a professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. While my first research projects were very much within the dominant modes of inquiry for someone in the field, I quickly moved beyond the boundaries of European history to merge my interests in social justice and musical performance in order to investigate protest on the Broadway stage and the intersection of gay and Jewish identity in the performing arts. Although some have regarded these cross-disciplinary and cross-thematic forays as either irrelevant or vanity projects, I see them as central to any study of persecution and how a victimized group can respond to such persecution, in this case through performance. Scholars of the Holocaust are keenly aware of the impact of popular culture on preserving historical memory. After *Schindler's List*, Steven Spielberg created the Survivors of the Shoah Foundation to collect the oral testimonies of thousands of Holocaust survivors. Just as dramatic, after the West German broadcast of the 1979 television miniseries, *The Holocaust*, public

opinion moved in favor of a more thorough and collective soul-searching, and it may have helped to tip the balance in the German parliament towards removing the statute of limitations on Nazi war crimes.

Performance is clearly a potent medium for spreading and making accessible what otherwise might be problematic and unpopular. A song's poetry and music can change reality, maybe not by immediately resulting in changes in law, but by having a deeper impact on the society that makes laws. "We Shall Overcome" is perhaps nearly as emblematic of the civil rights movement as Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.[1] The culture and musical expression of the antiwar movement of the 1960s are also nearly impossible to separate from a discussion of its politics. In the late 1980s, and especially in to the 1990s, a number of important protest pieces on Broadway, television, and film, raised awareness about AIDS and helped to cultivate greater sympathy and action on behalf of sufferers of the disease. In the end, I would argue that one cannot understate the impact of performance on both shifts in popular attitudes and the construction of the national imaginary. In the words of David Román, professor of English at the University of Southern California, performance allows for a "process of exchange—between artists and audiences, between the past and the present—where new societal formations emerge."[2]

The major objective of this volume is to analyze the trends, musical formats, and rhetorical devices used in popular music to illuminate the human condition. By comparing and contrasting musical offerings in a number of countries, and in different contexts from the nineteenth century until today, the book aims to be a sweeping introduction to the history of social protest music. Questions and themes which the volume will address include:

1 What is social protest music?
2 What has been the historical link between social protest and popular music, and how has this evolved over time?
3 What has been the impact of social protest music on society in general?
4 How has social protest music addressed issues of race, gender, and class?
5 What were the diverse forms of social protest music in the United States in the twentieth century? How or why did so much social protest come from this one setting?
6 What are the shared tropological characteristics of, and salient differences between, musical social protest forms in countries across the globe?
7 What are criteria for effective uses of music as a form of social protest?

This collection demonstrates the great diversity in form and content of popular music (rock and roll in particular) as a means of social protest over time, focusing largely on the American and British context but also including a scan across continents. The volume owes its theoretical framework to the work of scholars Reebee Garofalo, Ian Peddie, R. Serge Denisoff, Ron Eyerman, and Andrew Jamison. Denisoff, one of

the first sociologists to examine critically the role of protest music, saw such songs as functions of a broader political movement. "Magnetic" songs, like "Give Peace a Chance," and "We Shall Overcome" attract people to movements and promote group solidarity.[3] "Rhetorical" songs (like Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On," and one of my personal favorites, Peter Gabriel's "Biko") are intended to change public opinion.[4] Eyerman and Jamison, in their groundbreaking work from 1998, *Music and Social Movements*, argued that Denisoff's view was too narrow, insisting that, "in social movements, musical and other kinds of cultural traditions are made and remade, and after movements fade away as political forces, the music remains as memory and as a potential way to inspire new waves of mobilization."[5] "What's Goin' On" illuminates this point, re-recorded in 2001 in multiple versions as an album to combat AIDS. The embrace by the gay rights movement in the 1970s of disco music and songs like Queen's "We Are the Champions," which were not intended as protest media, demonstrates how music can be reinvented and encoded with protest content over time.

By virtue of the history of rock music, the volume is primarily Anglo-American centered, but a focus on this realm from the 1950s onward alone would be too narrow. I began with the supposition that the book's temporal and spatial framework had to be broadened for it to have the greatest explanatory power. This entailed going back in time in United States history to show the various strands of musical protest in popular music that fed into rock and roll, and then expanding outward from the US to assess similar musical movements worldwide—and particularly the relationship between an external cultural force, like American rock, and indigenous pop music forms with protest content. Because of the historically significant impact of rock from the United Kingdom (from the "British Invasion" through punk and beyond), it is essential to include a number of distinct, stand-alone chapters here. To end the story in this way, though, would render voiceless the bulk of the world's population. In order to present a full picture in a way that is both specific (about social protest in rock and pop music) and broad in its application, I envisioned a volume in three parts—one dealing with the historical roots of pop music protest in the US in the nineteenth century through the 1960s; one dealing with protest in diverse forms of rock from the 1970s onward; and, finally, a part focusing on rock/pop, politics, and social criticism across continents.

Protest music continues to be a relevant mode of artist expression and, when music is overtly political, controversy usually lurks close behind. Neil Young's 2006 song, "Let's Impeach the President," slammed the US war in Iraq, and in 2010 songwriters Mexia and Raul Antonio Hernandez protested Arizona's controversial immigration law with "Todos Somos Arizona—We Are All Arizona." The assault on unions by Republican lawmakers, which began with a vengeance in Wisconsin in 2011, resulted in VO5's aptly titled "Cheddar Revolution." In May 2011, television personality Jon Stewart faced off against his conservative counterpart Bill O'Reilly

over the issue of rapper Common's performance at the White House. Common has a song defending Joanne Chesimard, aka Assata Shakur, an African-American activist, former member of the Black Panthers, and convicted cop killer who escaped from prison in 1979 and has been living in Cuba ever since. During the interview, Stewart pointed to the hypocrisy of those on the right not decrying visits to the Bush White House by U2's Bono, whose song, "Native Son," about the Native American activist and convicted killer of two FBI agents, Leonard Peltier, could merit similar outrage.

Protest songs might not always be effective, nor may their impact be immediately felt, as Denisoff importantly reminds us.[6] Even Pete Seeger recognized his medium's limitations when he declared in 1968 that "No song I can sign will make Governor Wallace change his mind."[7] In 2012, the music accompanying the protests against union busting in Wisconsin did not help sway the voters of the state to recall their governor, and the "shock protest" against Vladimir Putin staged by the Russian feminist punk rock band Pussy Riot in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior in February 2012 resulted in two-year prison sentences for three of its members. Whatever the result of such public agitprop, it is clear that protest through song has become embedded in the DNA of our modern social and political fabric. The far more lasting significance of the musical canon of protest music is what it reveals about the human condition in the modern world of mass mobilization, mass politics, and mass media.

Notes

1 Dr. King declared that protest songs "serve to give unity to a movement." King, "Protest Movements: Class Consciousness and the Propaganda Song," *Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 9 (Spring 1968): 228–247.

2 David Román, *Performance in America: Contemporary U.S. Culture and the Performing Arts* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005), 1, 2.

3 Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the 20th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 9. See also R. Serge Denisoff, *The Sounds of Social Change* (New York: Rand McNally, 1972), Reebee Garofalo, ed., *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1992), and Ian Peddie, *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2006).

4 Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, 9.

5 Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, 1, 2.

6 R. Serge Denisoff, "Protest Songs: Those on the Top Forty, and Those of the Streets," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Winter 1970): 807–823.

7 Pete Seeger, "False from True," *Broadside*, Vol. 88 (January 1968), 1, as cited in Denisoff, "Protest Songs," 823.

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Part I

HISTORICAL BEGINNINGS, WAR, AND CIVIL RIGHTS

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1

SIGNIFYING FREEDOM

Protest in Nineteenth-Century African American Music

Burton W. Peretti

Figure 1.1 Slaves dance to music on a Southern plantation.

Two significant artifacts bracket the history of African American music in the nineteenth century: Richard Allen's *Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns* and James Weldon Johnson's and John Rosamond Johnson's song, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*.

In 1801, Allen, a former slave and a Methodist minister in Philadelphia, published his hymnal, the first ever compiled by an African American. Blending Allen's own verse with popular lyrics by Isaac Watts and other whites, the hymnal expressed the evangelical Christian dichotomy of good and evil. It did not, however, specifically mention slavery or emancipation. The *Collection* was a milestone in the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. The AME Church was created by Allen and others in reaction to racial discrimination by white Methodists. In

services, the hymnal was utilized in a culturally African American manner. Its contents were "lined out" by deacons, and congregants repeated the lines in response. Allen's hymnal inspired an urban form of the African tradition of call and response. Similarly, the hymns' images of sinners burning in hell and Christians finding salvation informed parishioners' views of slavery, which still flourished south of Pennsylvania. After 1810, Allen grew pessimistic about race relations and helped to plan efforts to colonize free blacks in West Africa. In these ways, the general sentiments of sin and salvation in the hymns took on political meaning within the AME.[1]

In 1900, James Weldon Johnson, principal of the Stanton School in Jacksonville, Florida, read his new poem "Lift Every Voice and Sing" at the school's annual Lincoln's Birthday celebration. Slavery now was extinct, and African American churches, schools, and other institutions had proliferated. "Lift Every Voice and Sing" indirectly paid tribute to Booker T. Washington, the guest of honor that day, whose national prominence was unprecedented among African Americans. Five years later, James's brother, John Rosamond Johnson, a successful songwriter and performer, set the poem to music. In 1919 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) proclaimed the Johnsons' song "the Negro National Anthem."[2]

The differing circumstances surrounding Allen's hymnal and the Johnsons' anthem encapsulates a century of change for African Americans. As the 1800s dawned, slavery was the norm of black life. Allen witnessed the revolution in Haiti, but also the failure of revolts in the United States and the westward expansion of slavery. After Allen's death in 1831, though, political and military conflict led to the destruction of slavery and a new legal status for all black people. The Johnson brothers in 1900 enjoyed freedoms, wealth, and opportunities that Allen had never known. Nevertheless, despite these changes, the United States in 1900 remained discriminatory and lethally hostile to blacks. After the demise of Reconstruction, segregation, lynching, and unequal justice ruled the South, and discrimination and racism prevailed nationwide.

As a result, the anthem, like Allen's hymnal, became a coded statement of protest. The hymnal couched its concerns in the rhetoric of religion, while the Johnsons' song optimistically stressed social uplift. Black music throughout the 1800s generally is devoid of overt protest. The music cannot be said to illustrate the diverse and articulate activism of black abolitionists, officials, and community leaders in that century.[3] Instead of explicitly addressing grievances, music of the 1800s encoded and emboldened black political and social movements for equality.

Music, like religion, both supported and transcended daily struggle, offering less of a diary of protest than a rich cultural and emotional crucible in which the struggle was forged. The struggle altered black life profoundly. Shackles were broken, families migrated from plantations, urban black communities expanded, levels of education grew exponentially, and skilled black professionals multiplied. Music evolved in step

with these revolutionary events, but also remained a repository of cultural memory. Still-popular spirituals evoked the miseries of slavery, but also reminded black listeners of the persistence of poverty, limited education, segregation, and backwards rural life as the twentieth century dawned. The double-faced nature of music, looking backward to lingering horrors and forward to a radically improved future, helped to make it a powerful presence in African American culture.

The AME church's story illustrates religion's central role in formulating an articulate black musical voice. As a young slave, Richard Allen became a Methodist because "the plain simple gospel suits best for any people." Like white Methodists, slaves and free blacks were stirred by the emotional immediacy of the hymns and their message of personal salvation. In Allen's Philadelphia church and in other AME parishes, loud and spirited singing predominated. Parishioners set hymn verses to well-known tunes, but also improvised their own melodies. White observers were struck by their spontaneous vocal response to the deacons' line readings. One noted a "quicker and more animated style of singing," while another was haunted by verses sung "in a loud, shrill monotone" and the "agonizing, heart-rending moaning" that concluded the readings. Men and women often took turns in singing the responses. Individual singers, moved by the worship, offered their own musical contributions. This emotionalism was the urban equivalent of the spiritual rapture experienced by blacks (as well as whites) in the southern rural revivals of the early 1800s.[4] In the North, Christianity inspired African Americans to condemn slavery on the basis of Christian values. The hymnal also abetted the rise of literacy among politically-minded African Americans.

The growth the AME church and its music took place within the context of increased white hostility and the expansion of slavery. Racist "scientific" theories of human difference undermined ideals of equality espoused by Enlightenment philosophers. Political parties and working men's associations empowered average white men to the detriment of nonwhites, whom they demonized as unworthy competitors. Slavery was abolished in the North, but black residents lost voting and civil rights and suffered from de facto segregation. In the South, the cotton boom expanded slavery. Prosperous planters no longer bothered to apologize for slavery as a necessary evil. Black leaders, such as Richard Allen, were moved to advocate African colonization, ostensibly to convert natives' souls, but mainly to create havens for refugees from American racism.

Positive developments also shaped black musical expression. Show business emerged as an industry, especially in the North, and talented performers found receptive black and white audiences. Small black economic elites of New York, Philadelphia, and other cities patronized classical performers such as the soprano Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, the tenor Thomas Bowers, and the trumpet player and conductor Frank Johnson. The AME and other churches produced concerts of sacred music, and trained composers wrote classical works. During the 1820s,

the African Grove Theater in Manhattan pioneered all-black musical theater that entertained patrons of both races.[5]

The black working class experience also proved significant. Competition for jobs turned northern cities into racial tinderboxes, which often exploded into riots. The southern migrant and civic activist David Walker attacked southern slavery in his *Appeal* (1829), but its ferocity resulted from the daily indignities Walker endured in Boston.[6] Black militancy was suppressed violently by working-class whites, and it was also symbolically neutralized by the latter's favorite theatrical genre, blackface minstrelsy. White minstrel performers' crude mimicking of mannerisms, language, and bodily movement ridiculed African Americans, but also paid a curious backhanded compliment to black music and dance. Working-class race relations would continue to shape popular music.

Since overt protest would have been fruitless, black performers instead exploited minstrelsy to advance their careers. The dancer William Henry Lane, who gained fame as Master Juba, was the sole African American performer to conquer the antebellum stage. The amazingly acrobatic Lane helped to invent modern tap dancing, and his high-stepping dance routine, known as "patting Juba," shaped black dance nationwide. Lane toured Europe and entertained royalty before his premature death in 1852.[7] Other dancers, musicians, and composers gained some renown, becoming pioneers in African American commercial music. Popular entertainment militated against social activism, but it provided black performers with unprecedented fame and visibility, and it gave them opportunities to communicate in code with a national audience.

In these same years, race relations were aggravated by growing disputes over slavery. Rebellions such as the Denmark Vesey conspiracy of 1822 and Nat Turner's insurrection in 1831 led white masters to fear slave religion. In these rebellions, plots were hatched during religious services and cited the crusading language of hymns and the Bible. Masters suspected that music served as a coded plotters' language. Among the dozens hanged with Denmark Vesey was a man falsely accused of sounding a trumpet to incite revolt. Nat Turner's preaching and reading of the Bible compelled fearful southerners to outlaw literacy, religious gatherings, and hymn singing among slaves.[8]

Slave music had faced repression for centuries. Caribbean masters regulated music-making beginning in the 1600s. After the Stono Rebellion of 1739, South Carolina prohibited slaves' use of "drums, horns, or other loud instruments, which may call together, or give sign or notice to one another of their wicked designs or purposes."[9] By the 1800s, all slave states had passed such laws. In the wake of Nat Turner's revolt and the rise of northern abolitionism, southern whites developed paranoia about slave insurrection that, itself, helped to precipitate the Civil War.

Little study of slave music was made before 1861. Nevertheless, eyewitness accounts document African American musical expression in the South. This

testimony indicates that slave songs often expressed not rebellion, but simple endurance. People in bondage were forced to work without wages for six long days every week. Work songs alleviated some of the burden of their work in varied settings. At docks, slave stevedores bellowed out improvised verses while handling boat cargo. Most slaves were employed on cotton plantations, and accounts indicate that many of them were forced to sing against their will. Masters and overseers mistrusted silent workers and believed that singing improved their productivity and morale. Due to this coercion, "field hollers" and "shouts" did not merely assist repetitive physical work; they also expressed despair. As Frederick Douglass memorably wrote, "it is a great mistake to suppose [slaves] happy because they sing. The songs of the slave represent the sorrow, rather than the joys, of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by tears."[10]

Though they might have resulted from coercion, field hollers and shouts diverted slaves from drudgery and stoked their creativity. Call and response was widely practiced; a work-gang leader sang lines of verse, and gang members improvised answers. Some field hollers revisited the plots of popular trickster tales—stories about Br'er Rabbit and other animals who outwitted powerful oppressors. Trickster tales might be called secular analogues to the coded messages of salvation found in hymns. Field hollers also made reference to biblical tales of liberation involving Moses, liberator of the Hebrews, and Christ the Savior. Other work songs, though, expressed a loss of hope, enumerating slaves' grievances against God and master. People sold "down the river" sang laments on the way to their new plantations. By telling it like it really was, though, such songs subverted whites' demands that slaves sing cheerfully. As a former slave insisted, these "sorrow songs" "can't be sung without a full heart and a troubled spirit."[11]

Seasonal events inspired work song genres such as the celebrated corn shucking songs. In December, slaves would gather to husk mountains of corn ears. White families picnicked on porches and listened to the corn shuckers, who "make the forest ring with their music." Verbally creative work leaders called out verses that described the event itself:

> All them pretty girls will be there …
> They will fix it for us rare …
> I know that supper will be big …
> I think I smell a fine roast pig …
> A supper is provided, so they said …
> I hope they'll have some nice wheat bread, / Shuck that corn before you eat.[12]

Such light-hearted lyrics suggest what the slaves probably sang to themselves when they did not work. During Sunday rest, dance tunes were as common as hymns—although devout masters often forbade dancing. Some owners, though, encouraged Sunday

revels so that slaves might subsequently work harder. Some musicians could play the fiddle or banjo, while homemade instruments were constructed out of gourds, wood, animal guts, bones, and rocks. These revels borrowed white lyrics and dance steps, but also featured unmistakably African-derived movement, such as jerking, shuffling, or patting Juba, and African American musical elements such as call and response. The songs retold trickster stories and satirized masters' manners.[13]

Even well-intentioned white listeners invaded slaves' privacy on Sundays. Family and community life among slaves were permitted little sanctity. Enslaved blacks thus practiced caution. Expressions of rebellion and the desire for freedom were translated into coded trickster work songs and spirituals about Moses. This coding persisted long after slavery was abolished, and still influences African American music today.

Slaves' distinct skill at expressing multiple meanings in songs and stories has been labeled "signifying." Rooted deeply in the culture of the African Diaspora, "signifying" mystified antebellum whites. In 1838, for example, the actress Fanny Kemble was puzzled when slave rowers at her husband's Georgia plantation sang:

> Jenny shake her toe at me, / Jenny gone away.
> Hurrah! Miss Susy, oh! / Jenny gone away.

"What the obnoxious Jenny meant by shaking her toe, whether defiance or mere departure, I never could ascertain," Kemble wrote. "I have never yet heard the Negroes … sing any words that could be said to have any sense." Chadwick Hansen has since determined that the rowers actually said the word *to*, from the African Kikongo language, meaning "body part" or "buttocks." Jenny actually was not shaking her toe. Fanny Kemble reported the rowers' "satisfaction" as they conveyed this coded message with "a good deal of dramatic and musical effect."[14]

Slaves' work songs were rough analogues to the commercial music enjoyed by northern free blacks. These secular music genres, taken together, became the foundation of future black popular music. For white listeners, though, as well as for ministers and other black leaders, the most significant slave music was religious. In the 1860s, white authors first grouped sacred slave songs under the designation "spirituals." Spirituals poignantly expressed African Americans' emotional and sacred yearnings. Many of the songs featured borrowings from Baptist and Methodist hymnody. Spirituals combined hymn phrases with slaves' favorite parables and folk tales, and preachers often lined out the verses through call and response.[15]

Spirituals especially captivated elite white listeners. They jotted down the lyrics of spirituals, and a few even notated the tunes. Whites usually overheard the singing of spirituals while witnessing field labor, Sunday services, and slave holidays. Like work songs, many spirituals were "sorrow songs," biblical expressions of grief and longing that were relevant to slave life. The titles convey these sentiments: "Sometimes I Feel

Like a Motherless Child," "Trouble in Mind," "O Rocks, Don't Fall on Me," "And the Moon Will Turn to Blood," "I've Been Rebuked and I've Been Scorned," and "Let My People Go."

Early published collections represented spirituals as unadorned melodies, obscuring the fact that they were sung in many different ways. As even the collectors noted, slaves rarely sang in unison, but entered at different times to create a rich counterpoint. African heterophony, or multi-part singing, thus persisted in the South. Individual singers stretched syllables and embroidered the melodies, and clapping and vocal interjections enlivened the spiritual. "Jubilee" songs, the optimistic counterpart to sorrow spirituals, celebrated the Hebrew escape from bondage, the Resurrection, and other liberationist tales. "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Roll, Jordan, Roll," "My Lord, What a Morning," and "Sabbath Has No End" were common jubilee spirituals.[16]

When slave religion was outlawed in the wake of the Turner rebellion, services went underground. As a result, most singing of spirituals was unheard by whites until the Civil War. Sunday services, baptisms, and even weddings and funerals transpired in forests and swamps far removed from the masters' homes. As former slaves later recounted, ring shouts often followed these clandestine Christian services. Dancing in a circle, in shuffling or in elaborate steps, participants took care not to cross their legs, as in secular dance. Since drums were outlawed, slaves used bones, wood, patting Juba (hands on the hips and thighs), and their shuffling feet to supply the rhythm. As at revival meetings, participants might be overcome by the spirit and fall unconscious.[17]

Spirituals, ring shouts, and coded songs mocking white masters expressed the discontent that led thousands to escape slavery via the Underground Railroad. In the North, former slaves such as Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown told whites of the horrors of the "peculiar institution" and converted many to abolitionism. Douglass and Brown cited the spirituals as evidence of the slaves' Christian faith and humility. White abolitionists portrayed slaves even more sentimentally, describing them as powerless victims. This tendency obscured the variety and richness of slave music, at least until the Civil War opened up rural black life to more observation.

During the Civil War, as Union armies moved southward and plantation owners fled, slavery steadily eroded. It was in the black "contraband" camps, and the experimental free communities they originated, that most northern reformers were first exposed to slave music. A white observer in Louisiana was struck by the "melodic speech" he heard in a congregation, where a freed man's "voice rises and falls in the cadence of a rude song, the congregation accompanying his voice, the men in a groaning voice and the women and children in all sorts of wailings and whinings." In the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia, Charlotte Forten, a black Philadelphia abolitionist, and the white Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson recorded

"spirichels"–a local term for sacred songs that later took hold nationally. Higginson, commander of the first Union Army company of emancipated slaves, sketched his troops' musical activity one night in camp. "A feeble flute stir[red] somewhere in some tent …, a drum throb[bed] far away in another." A ring shout took place in "a regular native African hut … crammed with men, singing at the top of their voices, in one of their quaint, monotonous, endless, negro-Methodist chants" while "all keep steadily circling like dervishes." Higginson heard singers devise clever new lyrics for the tune "John Brown's Body."[18]

The announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation on New Year's Day 1863 was greeted as the long-awaited jubilee. On a South Carolina island, soldiers and local African Americans held a gala ceremony and feast. As Colonel Higginson waved an American flag, an elderly black man and two women began an impromptu rendition of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee." "Firmly and irrepressibly the quavering voices sang on, verse after verse; others of the colored people joined in." "I never saw anything so electric; … it seemed the choked voice of a race at last unloosed." Black singing greeted other Union advances as well. When General Sherman's soldiers captured Savannah, Georgia, black residents sang, "Glory be to God, we are free!" In 1865, the fall of the rebel capital inspired more musical celebrations. Men jailed in a Richmond, Virginia, auction pen, sang, "Slavery chain done broke at last … I's goin' to praise God till I die"; other black men soon set them free. Crowds of freedpeople sang "Richmond town is burning down, High diddle diddle inctum inctum ah," and greeted Abraham Lincoln's brief visit with jubilee songs.[19]

Emancipation altered African American music in important ways. Four million freedpeople transformed their lives, reuniting their families, giving themselves new names, seeking jobs and schooling, and building communities. "We have progressed a century in a year," the black missionary Jonathan Gibbs exulted. New black churches proliferated and became community institutions. Ministers and Union Army veterans became model "race men"—principled and hard-working defenders of black people's new status. New laws, such activists argued, must provide African American men with paid work, property ownership, legal marriages and parenthood, and the vote. (Black women did not benefit from such advocacy.) Their efforts helped to achieve the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, intended to protect the black man's vote.[20]

Freedom gradually transformed black church music. Some congregations retained folk elements. In many AME and Methodist churches, Sunday gatherings began with a formal service in which an elder "deaconed" or line-read a hymn, and the congregation responded. As the white observer William Francis Allen noted, a ring shout might follow: "the benches are pushed back to the wall … old and young … all stand up in the middle of the floor, and … the 'sperichil' is struck up." However, some ministers, influenced, to some extent, by visiting northern white abolitionists, banned the ring shout. Believing that former slaves must be "lifted up" to the val-

ues of the genteel middle class, they instituted formal singing and a strict code of church behavior. In 1867, Allen observed that spirituals were "going out of use on the plantations" of the Sea Islands and being replaced by formal hymn singing. Harriet Beecher Stowe similarly regretted that black church singing was becoming "a closer imitation of white, genteel worship … solemn, dull, and nasal."[21]

Spirituals were publicized nationally by white admirers, who transformed them for public consumption. In the manner of some postwar black church services, spirituals became more genteel and separate from their folk roots. In the Sea Islands, William Francis Allen, Lucy McKim Garrison, and Charles Pickward Ware compiled an extensive portfolio of slave songs, published in 1867 as *Slave Songs of the United States*. It was the first collection of its kind. Allen's preface differentiated slave songs from "spurious" minstrel tunes, and sought to locate their African qualities. He identified heterophony when he noted that "there is no singing in parts, as we understand it, and yet no two [people] appear to be singing the same thing." Allen also cautioned that, while the spirituals were "taken down by the editors from the lips of the colored people themselves," the transcriptions are "but a faint shadow of the original":

> The voices of the colored people have a peculiar quality that nothing can imitate; and the intonations and delicate variations of even one singer cannot be reproduced on paper. And I despair of conveying any notion of the effect of a number singing together.[22]

Slave Songs, as well as subsequent collections, such as Thomas P. Fenner's *Cabin and Plantation Songs* (1876), helped to adapt African American music to white middle-class tastes. White anthologists eagerly "cleaned up" the rhythm, harmony, and pitches in the process of notating them. This bowdlerizing made spirituals accessible to middle-class whites, who considered even the simplified printed versions to be exotic and fascinating. Fearful about the future of race relations after emancipation, white Americans embraced simplified black music as evidence that African Americans were well-mannered and unthreatening.

The Fisk University Jubilee Singers became famous in this context. Fisk, located in Nashville, struggled financially. In 1871, George L. White, Fisk's white treasurer, and Ella Sheppard, a student and former slave, transformed the glee club into a fundraising attraction. The nine-person choir (seven of them ex-slaves) sang in local churches and encountered white hostility. White then scheduled a tour of the North. Performing a classical repertoire, the Jubilee Singers became the first African American group to give formal concerts. Racism and poor ticket sales continued to bedevil them, though, until an audience of ministers in Oberlin, Ohio, cheered them. Prestigious invitations poured in, and the Singers appeared at Henry Ward Beecher's famed Brooklyn church and at the White House. Touring Europe, they sang before Queen Victoria. The Singers returned to Fisk with $50,000 in earnings.

Like the spirituals anthologists, the Jubilee Singers simplified slave songs. Their white arranger, Theodore Seward, set the tunes in European harmony and eliminated call and response, heterophony, and pentatonic scales. Songs in the Fisk catalog contained virtually no laments or protests. These arrangements, like others, aimed to "lift up" black music and align it with white middle-class values. The Singers' success bred imitators at other black colleges, as well as fraudulent "Fisk Jubilee Singers" that criss-crossed the nation. Fisk's ensemble, weary of touring, disbanded in 1878.[23]

These were also problematic years for African American churches. Observers noted that males, especially, were abandoning the pews, and that congregations increasingly were dominated by women. After about 1880, though, African American churches showed signs of revival. The Holiness or Sanctified movement brought millions back into the fold; the old spirituals were celebrated in new published collections; and the Fisk Jubilee Singers resumed touring.[24] African American culture was becoming increasingly secular, but black churches adapted, and their music remained vital.

In the secular realm, the dedication to cultural uplift reflected the high value that educated African Americans placed on classical music. Like their white counterparts, black elites viewed classical music as a vehicle for intellectual and spiritual self-cultivation. In the 1870s, black-run opera houses operated in Washington, D.C., and Brooklyn. For forty years Walter Craig led a popular high-society band in Manhattan. Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield and other antebellum African American concert singers had embarked on tours, and after the Civil War their examples were followed by Mamie Flowers, Ann and Emma Hyers, Sisieretta Jones, and Sidney Woodward.[25]

James Monroe Trotter expressed the ideal of cultural uplift through classical music in his book *Music and Some Highly Musical People* (1878), the first musical history of America ever published. An escaped slave, Union Army veteran, and Boston civil servant, Trotter promoted "the beauty, power, and uses of music" and chronicled the activities of black musicians nationwide. He briefly acknowledged that these musicians suffered from "color-prejudice, the extent of whose terrible, blighting power none can ever imagine that do not actually meet it." Some years later, elite African Americans and advocates of spirituals received endorsement from one of Europe's leading classical composers. In 1892, Antonin Dvořák became the director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. African American students such as Will Marion Cook and Harry Burleigh performed spirituals for Dvořák, who told a reporter, "I am now satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called negro melodies. These are the folk songs of America, and your composers must turn to them … In the negro melodies of America I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music."[26]

The effort to improve the lot of African Americans by lifting them up culturally faced many difficulties. Uplift, above all, was checked by persistent white racism.

When the euphoria surrounding emancipation had dissipated, American race relations regained its typically bleak appearance. Despite sacrifices in battle and constitutional gains, most African Americans found daily life after the war little changed from before. Radical Reconstruction was challenged by the Ku Klux Klan and other southern whites. Reconstruction policies did not provide economic independence to former slaves, and northern whites, distracted by other issues, withdrew their support. Poverty, illiteracy, and the indignity of sharecropping burdened most southern African Americans, and new segregation laws and restrictions on voting relegated them to second-class citizenship.

Black musicians suffered along with them. Racism dogged the Fisk Jubilee Singers even in the North, where white journalists called them "trained monkeys" who sang "with a wild darkey air." The Singers were banned from better hotels and forbidden from entering concert venues through the front door. Klan violence encouraged Fisk University to use the Singers' earnings to build the fortress-like Jubilee Hall. A leading black pianist, Thomas Greene Wiggins, suffered throughout his life from racism. At the age of eight, Wiggins, a self-taught, blind player with a staggering technique and memory, had been first exhibited in recital by his master, James Bethune, who advertised him as "Blind Tom Bethune." When Wiggins turned twenty-one, after emancipation, James Bethune persuaded the Georgia government to declare him insane and name Bethune as his guardian. Decades later, Wiggins was still touring, billed as "the last slave set free." Wiggins earned the Bethune family $750,000 during a half century of performing. (Another blind piano virtuoso, John William "Blind" Boone, enjoyed a profitable concert career thanks to a supportive black manager.)[27]

In such conditions, protest—musical and otherwise—was dangerous. Black professionals, such as musicians, inspired white envy, and mere survival might prove difficult. Successful black performers were targets of mob hatred. In 1900, the father of jazz clarinetist Big Eye Louis Nelson was among the African Americans killed in New Orleans by rioting whites. The same year, Manhattan's theater district was wracked by racial violence. George Walker, half of the famous stage team of Williams and Walker, was knocked unconscious and dragged down the street by whites, and was rescued from a likely death by policemen. The singer and songwriter Ernest Hogan also was injured in this riot.

Some performers transcended this racism, though, and turned music into a coded form of protest, in effect beating whites at their own game. Some achieved fame and fortune, and a few even managed to express themselves freely and honestly. During Reconstruction, musicians manipulated white expectations to achieve professional success. In this era, song lyrics often were racially offensive; black stage stereotypes were vicious caricatures; and African Americans' earnings were inferior to those of whites. These conditions exacted a psychological toll on black performers, but tough, ambitious, and talented individuals made the most of opportunities. In the 1870s

and 1880s, they pioneered African American success in commercial music, blazing trails for future generations.

The first, and most problematic, genre in which musicians emerged was blackface minstrelsy. Like racism itself, minstrelsy survived the Civil War, but the war also fundamentally altered it. Its core audience now lay in the rural South, not northern cities, and shows now featured African American performers, who, like their white predecessors, covered their faces with burnt cork to become "black" in the minstrel manner. The original "Georgia Minstrels" troupe was created in 1865 by a white man who employed fifteen of his former slaves; its success inspired many other similarly named groups. Black minstrel comedians, such as Wallace King and Billy Kersands, gained wealth and fame, at the price of perpetuating stereotypes throughout their careers.[28]

The performer-songwriters James A. Bland, Sam Lucas, and Gussie Davis were luckier. Although they initially performed in blackface and wrote songs in the offensive "coon" genre, these men were educated musicians who earned success in Tin Pan Alley, New York City's songwriting industry. Bland, the composer of "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny," eventually moved to Europe, where he performed out of blackface. Lucas left minstrelsy for the theater, becoming the first African American actor to play the title role in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Davis operated his own minstrel troupe before moving to New York City. The ballad "In the Baggage Coach Ahead" was one of Tin Pan Alley's biggest hits, making Davis the most successful black songwriter.[29]

Always, though, performers had to contend with the crippling stereotypes of the day. Music and the theater romanticized the antebellum South. White Americans wary of intense industrialization, immigration, and labor conflict embraced nostalgic images of white "colonels" and "belles," faithful elderly slaves, and foolish "pickaninnies" and "coons." Such imagery reinforced southerners' pride in the Confederacy, reaffirmed white prejudices, and helped Yankees and Rebels heal their divisions. In the 1890s, some minstrel troupes joined large touring "spectacles," such as *The South before the War*, which reinforced this nostalgia. Other performing genres excluded blacks. Until 1910, when Bert Williams successfully integrated vaudeville, that thriving entertainment industry had been lily-white.[30]

African American performers especially achieved breakthroughs in genres that emerged during the 1890s. The Nineties have often been called a watershed in American culture, bringing movies, amusement parks, bicycles, chewing gum, and ragtime music to the fore. Leisure became less formal, allowing men and women to mix more. Ethnicities and races also increasingly interacted in entertainment venues. Music reflected the excitement and cultural change of the decade. Ragtime expressed the faster pace of city life and gave African American syncopation national exposure, but its heyday came after 1900. In the meantime, professional black performers found jobs in other genres. Hundreds were employed by Billy McClain, the

white impresario of the nostalgic revues *The South before the War* and *Darkest America*. In 1890, the United States census enumerated 1,490 "Negro actors [and] showmen"; ten years later, 530 were counted in New York and Chicago alone. Entertainment trade papers, such as *The Freeman*, advertised job opportunities.[31]

Black dancers exploited whites' interest in the cakewalk. In city theaters, tuxedo- and gown-clad black dancers enacted this competition for a cake, accompanied by minstrel tunes. Allegedly originating among slaves in Florida, the cakewalk first fascinated white audiences at postwar minstrel shows. By the 1890s, cakewalks incorporated stylized "high stepping" and "strutting." Urbanization had diluted the plantation stereotype, allowing black dancers such as Dora Dean, Charles Johnson, Bob Cole, and Stella Wiley to perform in respectable clothing and for good pay. Significantly, white spectators copied their cakewalk steps. African American music and dance were beginning to define mainstream white leisure.[32]

Other breakthroughs were achieved. In May 1890, Edison Records released George W. Johnson's "The Whistling Coon," the first recording ever made by an African American. Recordings, though, earned little income or publicity for black performers. More important was the genesis of black musical theater in New York. In 1897, the cakewalk dancer Bob Cole helped to devise *A Trip to Coontown*, the first show created by African Americans to appear on Broadway. As its title suggests, this musical comedy evoked old stereotypes; even innovative young black musicians had to recycle traditional formulas to gain a foothold. *A Trip to Coontown*, though, did not feature blackface or minstrel dances. A hit, it toured America and was later revived in New York.[33]

In 1898, another unexpected hit arrived. The score of *Clorindy, or the Origins of the Cakewalk* was composed by Will Marion Cook. A product of the black elite, Cook had studied in Europe and with Dvořák in New York, but racism barred his success in classical music. *Clorindy* featured dialect songs such as "Darktown is Out Tonight" and "Who Dat Say Chicken in Dis Crowd?" but his sophisticated musical score belied old stereotypes, as did Cook's well-publicized leadership of the all-white pit orchestra. Performers in *Clorindy* included the comedian Ernest Hogan (billing himself as "the unbleached American") and the team of Bert Williams and George Walker. Williams and Walker had begun touring as "the Two Real Coons," but they now were leading "race men" among entertainers. In a protest against lynching, the two performers refused, whenever possible, to appear in the Jim Crow South.[34]

In the meantime, Bob Cole teamed with John Rosamond Johnson and James Weldon Johnson to produce a series of musical comedies that broke with old stereotypes. The shows contained songs written in a non-derogatory African American dialect. John Rosamond Johnson, a pianist, regularly appeared with Cole in a stage act, dressed in white tie and black tails. The Johnson brothers, natives of Jacksonville, Florida, were well-educated advocates of black civil rights. James Weldon Johnson—novelist, diplomat, and later the first black secretary of the NAACP—particularly

embodied the post-Civil War generation's dual commitment to black artistic expression and racial equality.[35]

In 1900, as we have seen, James Weldon Johnson commemorated Lincoln's birthday with "Lift Every Voice and Sing," a song that blended his musical and political concerns. This "Negro National Anthem" was a fitting introduction to the new century, which W. E. B. Du Bois argued would be dedicated to solving "the problem of the color line."[36] As Du Bois also realized, African Americans taking part in the twentieth-century struggle for civil rights would rely, in part, upon a rich musical culture, closely allied with religion, as a foundation for expression and emotional fortitude. Music developed in the nineteenth century provided African Americans with a range of strategies and statements that taught reformers and revolutionaries how to speak, sing, and negotiate the racial landscape in pursuit of justice and equal rights.

Notes

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2 Rudolph Byrd, "Introduction," in Rudolph Byrd, ed., *The Essential Writings of James Weldon Johnson* (New York: Modern Library, 2008), xix–xx; James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way: The Autobiography of James Weldon Johnson* (1933; New York: Da Capo, 2000), 155–156.

3 See, for example, Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850–1925*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Jinping Wu, *Frederick Douglass and the Black Liberation Movement: The North Star of American Blacks* (New York: Garland, 2000).

4 Southern, *Music of Black Americans*, 79–80; and Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, updated ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 59–72.

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6 David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles* (1829; Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

7 Tyler Anbinder, *Five Points* (New York: Plume, 2002), 172–174; and Southern, *Music of Black Americans*, 94–95.

8 Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 195, 229.

9 Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals*, 59.

10 Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845; New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005), 30; Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals*, Chapter 9; and Southern, *Music of Black Americans*, 147–150.

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2

GOD, GARRISON, AND THE GROUND

The Hutchinson Family Singers and the Origins of Commercial Protest Music

Scott Gac

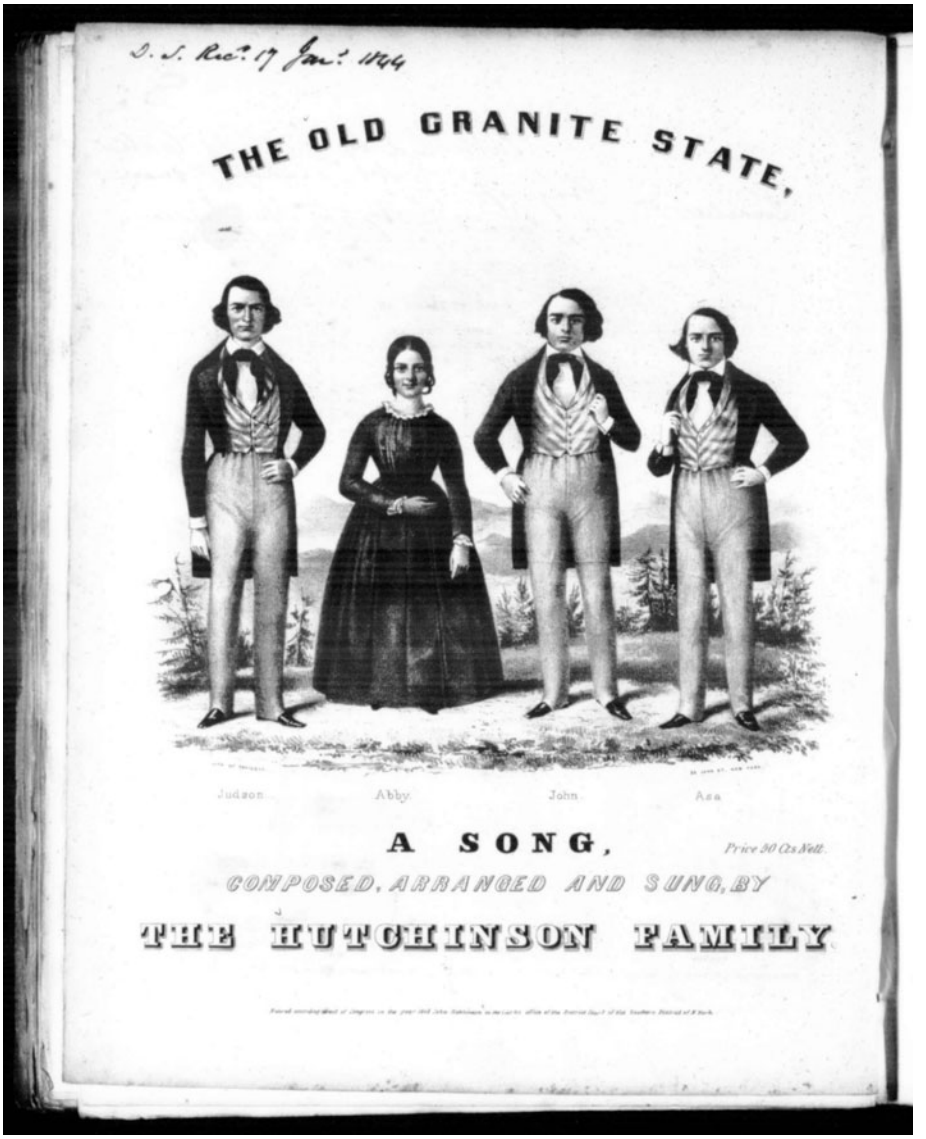

Figure 2.1 Cover of "The Old Granite State," by The Hutchinson Family.

"I am in the Minerva Rooms, on Broadway, in New York City, the commercial emporium of the Western continent," reported abolitionist Henry Wright in a letter from May 1848.

> I am sitting by a table, in front of a platform, on which sits Wm. L. Garrison, as President of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Francis Jackson, Wendell Phillips, and others. The hall is full, and we are in a most exciting and pleasant scene. I can term it nothing less than 'The Hutchinsons' Repentance.'

The celebrated music quartet, the Hutchinson Family Singers, was in trouble. Five years before, at a January 1843 antislavery meeting, the members of the group, a then unknown and unheralded band, embraced a public stance against the practice of American slavery. Their move hurtled the musicians into the spotlight, where through the composition and performance of abolitionist song, they developed the sound of the antislavery movement.[1]

Now, in the spring 1848, as Wright's report suggests, the protest singers were about to lose it all—the sheet music sales, sold-out shows in New York and Boston, and renown rarely matched in the history of American popular culture. A recent censure by the officials of the American Anti-Slavery Society stood in their way. The Hutchinsons had played a welcome song for Whig politician Henry Clay, whose gradualist stance on emancipation was hated by abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Frederick Douglass. The musicians' singular act exposed the charged, changed, nature of the reform movement and threatened the social activist credentials that the Hutchinsons had worked hard to gain.

At the New York meeting, the quartet, true to form, surprised attendees when, during a lull, they struck "a violent abolition song, avowing revolution if there be not emancipation."[2] William Lloyd Garrison responded: "Do they wish us to take this as evidence of their repentance? Are they sorry for what they've done?" In the silence that followed, America's chief anti-slavery moralist added, "If they are sorry for the deed, we shall hear from them again."[3]

The group waited until the meeting's next day to announce their atonement. It was a performance that showed an "Anti-Slavery duty and testimony" that convinced Frederick Douglass of the "honor, integrity, and fidelity of the Hutchinsons."[4] Antislavery reformers were relieved by the reunion of the reform society and the songsters, whom they believed "with their voices of most extraordinary melody, have great power over men's heads and hearts, for good or evil." Henry Wright closed his 1848 dispatch confident that "Anti-slavery claims them for her own, and should and will, I trust, have them to be *all* her own."[5]

What was at stake, however, stood beyond the realm of protest song and social reform. In the 1840s, market forces wrought tensions that helped define many aspects of American life—in particular, the market shaped how American consumers

interacted with a variety of cultural producers. There is no doubt that the Hutchinsons' antislavery crusade was central to the musicians' public and personal identities. But too much of a focus on the Hutchinson Family Singers' songs of protest clouds one of the most important functions of their social activism. Along with the Hutchinsons' espousal of nature and religion, their embrace of social reform helped listeners to see the musical act as one uncoupled from the gross Yankee materialism many feared rampant in the antebellum era. The support of the leaders of antislavery reform thus helped the Hutchinson Family Singers portray themselves as candid musicians—entertainers whose motivations embodied ideals nobler than profit. "They are not wandering, mercenary troubadours," Nathaniel Peabody Rogers explained, "who go about selling their strains for bread or brandy."[6] The sanction of the American Anti-Slavery Society was one of the three pillars of the Hutchinson Family Singers' public presentation; it protected them from the ironic scorn of many consumers, who cursed cultural productions undertaken solely for economic gain while purchasing tickets to the next event. It was the Hutchinsons' persona, crafted around God, Garrison, and the New Hampshire ground, that shielded the singers from such accusations, permitted them to sing for conscience and profit, and pushed listeners to welcome them as an authentic voice of social change.

As northern support for antislavery grew in the late 1840s, the goals for antislavery reform diffused. When Garrison and others had founded the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, they instilled in it the steadfast principles of moral suasion (changing peoples' hearts and minds rather than the political system) and immediatism (emancipation must happen now). But by the end of 1848, such an antislavery front had fractured. Stalwarts in the reform movement's political wing, which had started with the Liberty Party and continued in the Free Soil Party, now sought to curb slavery's expansion in the United States in the hope that the practice of slavery would someday die. The call to end slavery now (along with Garrison's more radical rhetoric on African American equality) held little widespread appeal as antislavery developed into a national political position. Many antislavery activists found themselves stretched thin amid the reform's irreconcilable poles.

As the popular voice of antislavery, the members of the Hutchinson Family Singers struggled to keep their socially conscious listeners content. During the presidential contest of 1844, the sheet music cover for the group's Liberty Party campaign song "Get Off the Track" depicted a train pulling the various antislavery factions—from Garrison's newspaper the *Liberator*, "Immediate Abolition," and the American Anti-Slavery Society, to the Liberty Party and Nathaniel Peabody Rogers's New Hampshire publication *The Herald of Freedom*—to victory. Such a harmonious vision, one that plunged a locomotive labeled for Henry Clay into a background ravine, proved to be a mirage.[7] As a result, the musicians who failed to keep everyone happy were in New York City in May 1848 to apologize to the American Anti-Slavery Society for their transgression: a salute to a gradual emancipationist and politician.

The Hutchinson musicians understood the importance of their ties to the American Anti-Slavery Society, an organization that shepherded them from the backwoods of New Hampshire to international fame. In the months following their New York penitence, though, the group's members hardly stayed true to the goals of Garrison's antislavery organization. Instead, they were swept by the strong political antislavery movement that took place in upstate New York, where the founders of the Free Soil Party held a well-attended meeting that settled on a platform that included, among other decrees, the non-extension of slavery into new territory. Many Free Soil adherents were more concerned with the effects of slavery on white workers than with black Americans or the callous practice of human bondage. As the politician, lawyer, and future Union Army general Benjamin Butler said in 1848: "Free labor cannot exist where slavery holds sway."[8] It was, some claim, a price that social reformers had to pay to reach a broad spectrum of Americans. The Free Soilers had launched a decidedly different version of antislavery from that of William Garrison and the American Anti-Slavery Society. Some of the Hutchinson clan attended the Free Soil convention. They composed new, festive, songs to embrace the latest political antislavery movement.[9]

In the upcoming years, Garrison, Douglass, and others battled with the members of the Hutchinson Family Singers over the group's ideals and reform commitment. The friction between the Hutchinson Family Singers and the American Anti-Slavery Society reflected the social and political realities of American reform in the 1840s and 1850s. Yet, even in the hubbub that led to the 1848 showdown with the American Anti-Slavery Society, the matter of materialism loomed. Critics characterized the welcome song for Henry Clay as transparent commercialism—"Anything to make money, now-a-days!" declared an editor in the *New Hampshire Gazette*.[10]

To the members of the Hutchinson Family Singers, such allegations were by now familiar. Throughout their career they navigated the line between music performance and profit. In 1844, for example, the musicians formed a communitarian society, comprised of their immediate relations, to quell family complaints over the singing troupe's sudden wealth. Asa Hutchinson understood the issue as one of personal and public import: "We cannot be so free to sing high and lofty sentiments to an audience when we feel bound to sing to their Pockets instead of their hearts."[11]

In May 1848, the Hutchinson Family Singers were one of the most renowned musical acts in the English-speaking world. They earned more than $1,000 a night for shows in New York and Boston—in an age when $500 represented a comfortable, respected, annual salary—regularly sold-out the largest urban venues at home and abroad, and sold thousands of copies of sheet music. They were also the voice of an antislavery culture that would culminate in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).

The celebrity of the Hutchinson Family Singers spawned a stream of family-singing imitators, from the Parker Family and Alleghenians to the New Hutchinson Family Singers, a second-rate act of the siblings' relatives formed in

1845–1846 when the real Hutchinson troupe was in Great Britain. The musicians in the Hutchinson Family Singers worried over such phenomena—and not because they might lose money to competition. They were concerned over their success. What did it mean that the group's sheet music – where the lithographed expressions of John, Judson, Asa, and Abby Hutchinson stared out from the covers – could be found in many northern parlors, while notes on the inner pages directed what was performed and heard? What did celebrity and wealth signal about the Hutchinsons as individuals and as a group? The quartet, and many of their listeners, wanted to know whether, as "advocates of human advancement," the Hutchinson Family Singers were a saleable curiosity or a valued addition to American life.[12]

The stardom and economic achievement of the protest musicians reveals the great change in New England and the North in the years before the Civil War. And, like many of their peers, the Hutchinsons looked upon one source of the change—the encroachment of market forces—with deep suspicion. Yet those same forces ensured that goods and information moved more quickly to a greater variety of places, more people lived and worked in urban settings, and that a stable, permanent, form of market exchange fostered leisure time for many middle and upper class Americans, who now could purchase for their families what they once had to make: in effect, the market revolution created the possibility for professional music performance. The books, meetings, museums, and music that filled Americans' lives helped proliferate cultural offerings on a scale previously unimagined. The accomplishment of the Hutchinson Family Singers, the first American music group to employ a message of social protest while earning a significant profit, was inextricably bound to these transformations.

To adequately come to terms with the Hutchinsons' career as social activists and musicians, one must move beyond their personal perseverance—which was legendary in the dismal times from 1840 to 1842, when it was easier for them to accumulate debt than applause—to appreciate how they navigated ties to the market as individuals and as public figures. Through an elaborate deployment of religion, reform, and nature in their personal and professional lives, the musicians of the Hutchinson Family Singers crafted an anti-market stance at the same time as they welcomed the market and earned impressive amounts of money.

Raised in a Baptist family in Milford, New Hampshire, a town on the state's southern border, John, Judson, Asa, and Abby Hutchinson were imbued with Christian ideals, not only at home, where events such as a harvest, birth, or death were explained through a religious framework, but in more communal spaces, such as school, where members of the quartet sat in a building that, for a while, served for both Baptist worship and public learning. Indeed, the teachers in Milford, John remembered years later, often "read the Bible and prayed" in class.[13] The Hutchinson youngsters were thus fully steeped in the ideals of the Second Great Awakening

when a series of Baptist revivals hit Milford between 1829 and 1831. At that time, John, along with his brothers, Benjamin, Joshua, Caleb, and several others of the Hutchinson clan, officially declared their faith.

A religious revivalist upbringing marked John, Judson, Asa, and Abby as part of an American generation confident in the ideals of free will, the power to make oneself worthy of being saved, and human perfection, a notion that privileged inner truths over outer display. Throughout their lives, the musicians upheld feeling over thought, community over country, and Christian morals over material gain. In choosing a career in music, the Hutchinson siblings opted for a genre many believed genuinely expressed emotion, represented the character of the land in which the performers were raised, and presented, in its purest form, a divine communication.[14] John Sullivan Dwight said, "there is always a calm Sabbath of the soul in the complete enjoyment of true music, filling the breast with light and love," to which William Wetmore Story would add, "Music seems to contain every other art, but no other art wholly contains music." And many agreed with the *Godey's Magazine* editor who, in 1844, heard the Hutchinson Family Singers "and felt proud of the genius which the green hills of New Hampshire had inspired and nurtured."[15]

Such ideals, though, often stood at odds with the commercialization of early America and the quartet's goal of professional musicianship. Raised in a world all but void of a history of American popular musicians, especially those to combine social protest and public entertainment, it's not surprising that the Hutchinson Family Singers first struggled to reconcile personal ideals with their performance. Though the group faced little competition when on tour in 1841 and 1842 in rural New Hampshire and Massachusetts, they failed to distinguish themselves beyond a harmonious vocal blend. Indeed, their concert repertoire apparently relied solely on the popular tunes of others. The Hutchinsons failed to give the 1840s cultural consumer what was most sought: as was the case for those who went to Christian revivals, the concertgoer expected to gain understanding and, especially, a window into the self. Whether in religion, where God was found within, popular culture, where Ralph Emerson and others lectured on the individual's preeminence, or in politics, where in campaign after campaign candidates framed themselves as men of humble means remade through self-reliance, antebellum American culture exhibited an array of self-expression.

Two moves fostered a more personalized persona for the Hutchinson Family Singers: Abby Hutchinson joined her brothers on stage and, from the stage, the musicians started to declare their reform ideals. The motivation for the group's first change, the inclusion of Abby, was most likely undertaken to address both a musical and social concern. Abby's contralto singing added a higher-pitched voice that countered the trio's blend of two baritones and a bass. Most important, when combined with her stage presence, the twelve year-old completed, in sight and sound,

the Hutchinson act as a *family*—and many of their fans agreed. At one of her first shows with the brothers, at Dartmouth College in July 1842, the singers noted of the audience, "all Gentlemen, No Ladies." The next night, John remembered years later, women "came out in number."[16] The Hutchinsons found a way to clear the moral hurdle that many musicians confronted. To be seen and heard as an ethical entertainment earned the sanction of the men of Hanover, New Hampshire, who clearly judged the songsters suitable for the entire household.

As a "nest of brothers with a sister in it," the Hutchinson Family Singers began to embrace a more intimate public persona.[17] Their adoption of a public antislavery position further articulated a distinctive identity for the performers. In the summer of 1842, Nathaniel Peabody Rogers, the William Lloyd Garrison of New Hampshire, prodded the Hutchinson Family Singers to craft an antislavery music. "They are abolitionists," Rogers said in his newspaper. "It need not affright them to have it announced."[18] Though the musicians were likely scared—such reform views, even in the antislavery stronghold of New England, were hotly contested, capable of eliciting an antiabolition response that ranged from noisy disturbance and arrest to violence—they opted to listen to him.

The group welcomed the new year, 1843, with some of their first public abolitionist offerings at an antislavery meeting in Milford, New Hampshire. On January 4th and 5th, activists gathered to honor Thomas Parnell Beach, a white protestor who had been jailed for his antislavery views. Recently released from prison, Beach entered Milford's Old Meeting House when suddenly, from the balcony or balcony stairs, the Hutchinson Family Singers "burst down upon" the assembly in song.[19] As unstaged as the music of the Hutchinsons appeared, clearly the singers were students of recent religious celebrations. In the revival tent, ministers read and anticipated the crowd's reactions to present a dramatic display founded on the appearance of spontaneity. The Hutchinson Family Singers, in their first foray into abolitionist entertainment, established a similar framework. Nathaniel Rogers was one of the first to note how carefully the group's "anti-slavery zeal" was linked to the "popular and striking music of Advent and Revival." Soon, their "practiced spontaneity" was, along with lyrical improvisation, an expected part of a Hutchinson Family Singers performance.[20]

The embrace of antislavery by the Hutchinsons brought about a swift change to the sound of antislavery reform. Earlier abolitionist music was based on the more staid Christian hymn tradition, which, according to the then famed church-tune composer Lowell Mason, should feature diatonic melody and harmony, present a limited range of notes (preferably no more than an octave), and move along a straightforward rhythm (no syncopation).[21] Antislavery music, such as Maria Weston Chapman's 1836 "Hark, Hark, it is the Trumpet Call" (also known as "Hymn No. 4,"), which is based on a Mason melody, embodies the genre.[22] The Hutchinson Family Singers moved antislavery music to the more frenetic sights and sounds of