

FANTASY AND FUGUE
ON
"MY LORD, WHAT A MOURNING"

by **Ralph Simpson**

For the Diamond Anniversary of the National Association of Negro Musicians

MY LORD, WHAT A MOURNING

**My Lord, What a Mourning, when the stars begin to fall.
You'll hear the trumpet sound to wake the nations underground,
Looking to my God's right hand, when the stars begin to fall.**

The spiritual is based on Revelation 8: 7-12, Holy Bible, KJV:

**...and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood ... a great
mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea ...and there fell a
great star from heaven ...the third part of them was darkened,
and the day shone not for third part of it, and the night likewise.**

The above scenario provides an occasion for mourning, rather than jubilation. The composer, nevertheless, elected to use the spiritual to indicate the sad state of affairs which might have resulted if the National Association of Negro Musicians had not been founded. The Fantasy opens with a statement comprising a call-response rendering of key phrases of the spiritual. Three bold pronouncements of this opening material relinquish to a "rapping," modal discussion of the chaotic plight as outlined in the Scriptures. Here the number 3 is operative: three flats in the signature, changing to three sharps, and later on, the three naturals, accessing tonal areas thirds apart. Also, the intercultural minor third riddles these terse ideas, and the ensuing writing uses triple meter and dancelike gestures. These episodes lead to the welcomed melody of the famed spiritual-presented three times, to bring the Fantasy to its conclusion.

Concurrent with the completion of the Fantasy, the composer learned that Herman Taylor would premiere this work. It was immediately decided that a fugue would follow the Fantasy, since Dr. Taylor has such strong affinity with Baroque music.

The subject of the fugue is a compressed version of the opening phrase of "My Lord, What a Mourning," and is intended to rejoice with NANM in its Diamond Jubilee Celebration. The subject, having been duly answered, is followed by contrapuntal gymnastics embracing the "joy" motive of J. S. Bach (da da DA), and by well-spaced statements of the spiritual's melody in the pedals. Interestingly, there is hardly a bar in the Fugue in which some reference to the spiritual is absent.

The first three of the concluding six bars utilizes four major chords: C, B, D-flat, and C in rapid succession, in deference to NANM for having reached this pinnacle. The final chord emits the highest pitched, full organ sounds of the Fugue, supported by the lowest and loudest sound possible from the pedals. This triumphant ending parallels the scope of viability held by the National Association of Negro Musicians.

Suggested Registration:

- I. Gt.Full without reeds-Sw. Full-Ped.Full, coupled to manuals.
- II. Gt.Fonds 8'-Sw.Fonds 8' with soft reeds-Ch.Solo reed-Ped. Fonds 16' and 8, coupled to SW.
- III. Gt.Full without mixtures-Sw. Full-Ped.Fonds 16', 8', and 4'.
- IV. Gt. Solo 8'-Sw.Gambe, celeste 8'-Ch. Flute, celeste 8'-Ped.Bourbons 16' and 8'.
- V. Sw.Solo reed-Ch. Fl and mutations-Ped. Fond 8'.
- VI. Gt. Full without reeds-Sw.Full with chorus reeds-Ch. Fonds 8', 4', 2', and tierce-Ped. Full.
- VII. Gt.Full-Sw.Full-Ch.Full-Ped. Full, coupled to manuals.

Fantasy and Fugue on "My Lord, What a Mourning"

RALPH SIMPSON
1994

♩ = 60

Manual

I | Gt *ff*

Pedal

4

7

10

Gt *f* ♩ = 90

Sw

60

Musical score for measures 60-62. The system consists of three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass staff. The grand staff contains chords and some melodic fragments. The bass staff is mostly empty with some rests.

63

rit.

Fugue ♩ = 80

IV { Gt

Musical score for measures 63-65. Measure 63 includes a *rit.* marking. Measure 64 features a double bar line. Measure 65 is the start of a section titled "Fugue" with a tempo marking of ♩ = 80. The grand staff shows a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. A bracket labeled "IV { Gt" is positioned above the grand staff in measure 65. The separate bass staff has a few notes in measure 64.

66

Musical score for measures 66-68. The system consists of three staves: a grand staff and a separate bass staff. The grand staff shows a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes in both hands. The separate bass staff is mostly empty with rests.

69

{ Ch

Musical score for measures 69-71. The system consists of three staves: a grand staff and a separate bass staff. The grand staff shows chords and some melodic lines. A bracket labeled "{ Ch" is positioned above the grand staff in measure 70. The separate bass staff has a few notes in measure 70.