

**A Concert in Celebration of the
75th Anniversary of the
Thirteenth Amendment to the
Constitution of the United States,
featuring THE GOLDEN GATE
QUARTET and JOSH WHITE at the
Library of Congress (1940), with
commentary by Sterling Brown,
Alain Locke, and Alan Lomax**

Part One: Negro Spirituals

- 1 FREEDOM**
(The Golden Gate Quartet) (1:14)
- 2 THE NEGRO SPIRITUAL**
(Alain Locke) (1:14)
- 3 NOAH**
(The Golden Gate Quartet) (2:35)
- 4 I'M SO GLAD TROUBLE
DON'T LAST ALWAYS**
(The Golden Gate Quartet) (0:57)
- 5 WE ARE CLIMBING
JACOB'S LADDER**
(The Golden Gate Quartet) (0:53)
- 6 OH MARY, DON'T
YOU WEEP**
(The Golden Gate Quartet) (1:43)
- 7 TRAVELING SHOES**
(The Golden Gate Quartet) (1:49)

Part Two: Blues and Ballads


- 8 HOW LONG HAS THAT
EVENING TRAIN
BEEN GONE?**
(Josh White) (2:27)
- 9 WHAT ARE THE BLUES?**
(Sterling Brown) (7:29)
- 10 POOR LAZARUS**
(Josh White, The Golden
Gate Quartet) (4:05)
- 11 JOHN HENRY**
(Josh White, The Golden
Gate Quartet) (4:29)
- 12 THE SOCIAL SONG**
(Sterling Brown) (1:07)
- 13 SILICOSIS BLUES**
(Josh White) (2:41)
- 14 TROUBLE**
(Josh White, The Golden
Gate Quartet) (3:54)

Part Three: Reels and Work Songs

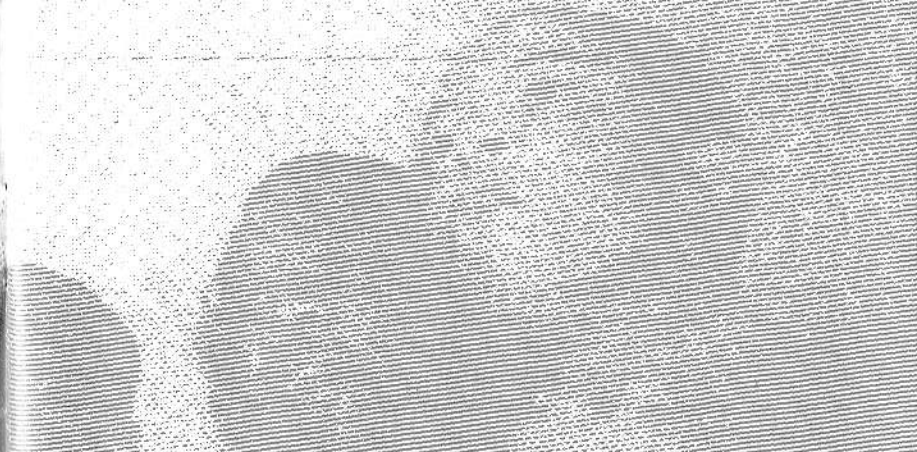
- 15 INTRODUCTION WITH
JUBA RECITATION**
(Alan Lomax, Willie Johnson) (2:05)
- 16 OLD DAN TUCKER**
(The Golden Gate
Quartet, Josh White) (1:28)
- 17 INTRODUCTION TO MR. RABBIT**
(Alan Lomax) (0:33)
- 18 MR. RABBIT, YOUR
EAR'S MIGHTY LONG**
(The Golden Gate
Quartet, Josh White) (3:40)
- 19 THE NEGRO WORK SONG**
(Alan Lomax) (1:14)
- 20 THE RAILROAD WORKERS CAMP**
(Alan Lomax, The Golden
Gate Quartet) (8:01)
- 21 NEGRO SONG AFTERWORD**
(Alan Lomax) (1:18)
- 22 ROCK MY SOUL IN
THE BOSOM OF ABRAHAM**
(Josh White, The Golden Gate Quartet) (2:08)
- 23 RUN, SINNER, RUN**
(Josh White, The Golden Quartet) (2:26)

Recorded at The Coolidge Auditorium of The Library of Congress, December 20, 1940

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This recording documents an historic Library of Congress concert—the Golden Gate Quartet's performance with Josh White—that stands as a remarkable event for its time, or indeed any time. The concert, titled "A Program of Negro Folk Song with Commentary," formed part of a festival recognizing the passage of three quarters of a century since the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution ended slavery in the United States. Produced under the patronage of the Librarian of Congress, Archibald MacLeish, and the Library's Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation, the four-day festival was conceived to accompany an exhibit of books, manuscripts, music,



paintings and other works of art documenting "the contribution of the American Negro to American culture." This notable series of exhibits and concerts was created with the advice of a group of eminent African American artists, scholars, composers and authors. The music committee members, all illustrious names, were Harry T. Burleigh, Lulu B. Childers, Dr. Alain Locke, William Grant Still, and Dr. R. Nathaniel Dett.

Josh White and the Golden Gate Quartet at Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Inaugural Ball, January, 1941, from left: Josh White, Orlandus Wilson, Clyde Riddick, Henry Owens, Willie Johnson.

With their counsel the Chief of the Library's Music Division, Harold Spivacke, designed a memorable musical offering to mark the occasion of the anniversary.

In addition to the Golden Gate Quartet and Josh White, the festival lineup offered two now-legendary singers, Dorothy Maynor and Roland Hayes, artists whose extraordinary powers of communication had deep roots in the spiritual and vocal traditions of the African American church. Both Hayes and Maynor sang Spirituals on their recitals; Hayes chose several with arrangements by black composers, and Maynor's program included two spirituals arranged by her teacher and mentor, R. Nathaniel Dett, as well as his art song, "My Day." Newly engaged as quartet-in-residence at the Library, the Budapest String Quartet performed works by two important black composers, Joseph Bologne chevalier de Saint-Georges, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

The juxtaposition of classical and traditional art, the formal and the vernacular, was unusual for the time. This was an era when folksong was, in Alan Lomax's phrase, "a stranger to the concert hall." The Golden Gate Quartet appeared with Josh White in the Library's intimate, rather austere auditorium, presented by a series internationally known for fine chamber music. Famous for its acoustics, the Coolidge was home to many great classical musicians of the day—Adolph Busch, Wanda Landowska, Béla Bartók, Gregor Piatigorsky, Leopold Stokowski, and many others. A program of spirituals, blues and ballads, reels and work songs was a decided departure from the norm.

The commentators for the program were three distinguished scholars of African American culture, Dr. Sterling Brown, Dr. Alain Locke, and Alan Lomax. Lomax, the great folk researcher and archivist, Brown, a poet with

the voice and presence of an orator, and Locke, a godfather to the Harlem Renaissance, were teachers and mentors of incalculable influence. That evening they gave eloquent introductions to performances that carry a powerful immediacy and profound emotional impact sixty years later. Speaking at a Library of Congress symposium in 1978, Sterling Brown told the story of this collaboration, born of a trip that he and Alan Lomax had taken with the Golden Gates and Josh White to Fisk University. The concert, he said, "honored me in having me on it, but also honored the Library of Congress in giving it." With audible emotion, Brown states, "This was a cultural event in Washington. It's very hard for my students to understand how strictly segregated this city was. How little contact there was. How little opportunity to show, in any dignified manner, the true contribution, the true participation of the American Negro. It was not so many eons back. It is startling to know what a wall there was." The wall cracked noticeably that night, as Brown and Locke paid tribute to the music of their race before an audience both black and white.

Perhaps it is imagination, but the nature of the occasion resonates vividly in these remarkable archival recordings, preserved on four sixteen-inch acetate discs, now remastered for this release. In the late 1930's the Library of Congress was prescient in establishing a policy to record all its concerts, a mandate that continues today, making the Bridge/Great Performances from the Library of Congress series possible. The more than three thousand recordings in the Library's concert archive—still growing with each concert season—embody a monumental legacy for our national musical heritage.

Anne McLean
Music Division, The Library of Congress

NOTES

by Horace Clarence Boyer

The Golden Gate Quartet

In 1930 four male students at Norfolk, Virginia's all-black Booker T. Washington High School casually harmonized on a few Negro Spirituals in Eddie Griffin's barbershop and liked what they heard and the way they felt while singing. On an impulse they decided to continue singing as a group, thus becoming participants in the "jubilee quartet" tradition, a black southern sacred singing movement that would eventually inspire a musical revolution called Rock and Roll. The jubilee quartets featured four male singers in vocal ranges from tenor to bass, with the second tenor often serving as the soloist on call-and-response songs; a close barbershop-like harmony emphasizing sharp and clear attacks and releases; a relatively close blend (but not so close that individual vocal qualities

could not be heard above the ensemble); and a dynamic range extending from the softest whisper to the loudest explosion.

To be sure, both black and white male quartets had been fixtures on the American musical scene beginning with the popular minstrel shows of the nineteenth century. However, a black male quartet featuring Negro Spirituals and other "church" songs, singing principally in black churches for black audiences, was a practice less than twenty years old in 1930. While there had always been a great deal of singing in the African American community since the days of slavery (male, female and mixed groups), formally organized groups were found mainly in colleges and show business.

Around 1917, the community jubilee quartet movement reached Virginia's Tidewater region, with the founding of the Norfolk Jubilee Quartet. This group, one of the most popular of the community-based groups, followed in the footsteps of two earlier groups, the Hampton Institute Jubilee Quartet (c. 1885-1955), and the very popular Dinwiddie Colored Quartet (c.1898-1904), of the John A. Dix Industrial School for Colored Children in Dinwiddie, Virginia. The Dinwiddie Quartet holds the distinction of being the second folk group in the country to record for a commercial record company (the Fisk Jubilee Quartet was the first). The Norfolk Jubilee Quartet, a group that sang and recorded secular music as the Norfolk Jazz Quartet, was soon joined by the Silver Leaf Quartet (1919-1979), the Virginia Female Singers (1920-mid-1940's), the Excelsior Quartet (c.1920-1932) and the venerable Harmonizing Four of Richmond (1927-). Outside the Tidewater Region jubilee quartets were springing up like wild flowers. Two of the most famous of these were the Fairfield Four of Nashville, organized in 1921, and the still popular Dixie Hummingbirds, organized in 1928 in Greenville, South Carolina.

Into this musical world came William Langford, first tenor, Henry Owens, second tenor, Willie Johnson, baritone and Orlandus Wilson, bass. They called themselves the Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet, unaware or unmindful of the fact that there were and had been several groups by that name, beginning with a group organized in Baltimore, Maryland in the 1890s. The Norfolk group differed from the others in that it was originally dedicated to African American sacred music and sang only in churches, while the earlier groups worked mainly in Broadway and club revues. The "Gates" as they were soon informally called, began to meet and harmonize everyday except Sunday at Griffin's Barbershop. These daily rehearsals served the group well, for they were soon in demand to sing at local churches and teas. Their style was, at first, similar to that of barbershop quartets and jubilee singers, emphasizing close harmony with precise attacks and releases. Most of their repertoire consisted of Negro Spirituals, to which they applied a rhythmic beat not unlike that associated with blues and jazz. In the late 1930s the Gates began to include songs of gospel music composers such as Thomas A. Dorsey, Lucie Campbell and Charles Albert Tindley, applying singing techniques like scooping and sliding. Early on, the Golden Gate's harmony and pulsating rhythms set them apart from other groups.

In 1935 the Gates were singing five days a week on a radio station in Columbia, South Carolina and by 1936 had a regular program on the 50,000-watt station WBT in Charlotte, North Carolina. It was during their stint on WBT that the Gates developed the sound that would make them the most popular jubilee quartet in the world—a rich, dark chocolate color, produced in a velvet texture that sounded as if it could almost be touched. In addition to other elements exploited by jubilee singers, the Gates, probably

inspired by the Mills Brothers, could imitate trains, boats, cars, whistles and motors with their voices. In the most elaborate presentation of this sound, three voices would set up a repetitive but quiet rumble over which Langford or Owens and occasionally Johnson, would add a highly rhythmic solo. Johnson called this sound "vocal percussion" with lyrics and it soon became the sound that all jubilee quartets sought to perfect.

The WBT broadcasts reached much of the eastern United States and brought the Gates to the attention of Victor Records's Bluebird label, for which they began recording in 1937. During their first session, they recorded a spirited and narrative version of the Negro Spiritual "Jonah," which became an immediate hit. The popularity of their recordings and radio broadcasts prompted John Hammond, impresario and record producer, to feature them in the famous 1938 Carnegie Hall "From Spirituals to Swing" concert. By the end of the concert the Gates had become the toast of New York, inspiring them to shorten their name to the Golden Gate Quartet. In 1940 they began a national CBS live broadcast from New York and it was at this time that they were invited to participate in this memorable concert at the Library of Congress.



Josh White

Joshua Daniel White (1915 - 1969) was much more closely related to the Golden Gate Quartet than is generally known. While the Gates were from Virginia, White was born in Greenville, South Carolina; and though the Gates gained fame singing sacred music and White became famous as a blues and folk singer, they had the same background and would return to that background throughout their lives. They were all "church" boys and gained their first experience as musicians in the "Junior" church. Joshua White sang in the children's choir and as a soloist in his father's church in Greenville.

At the age of eight his mother hired him out as the companion and guide to a group of blind performers; he learned the new gospel songs and gospel singing style from blind gospel and blues singer Joel "Joe" Taggart and the blues from such prominent blues men as "Blind" Lemon Jefferson and "Blind Blake" (Arthur Phelps). By the time of White's birth the blues as a textual and musical form was well established. White enjoyed singing sacred music but was torn between that and the blues. This pull between the sacred and the secular was made all the more difficult by his constant association with well-known blues singers. He learned to play the guitar from the blues men and wrote several blues that he would sing in juke joints with Blind Lemon Jefferson and Blind Blake.

Life on the road with the blues men presented many hardships for White. On his first tour with Taggart he witnessed a lynching and was later beaten up and jailed in Florida, having been mistaken for a fugitive. Nonetheless, by age fourteen, White had mastered the guitar to such a degree that Taggart invited him to play guitar on one of his recordings. White's virtuosic guitar playing in the

The singing White family at home, from left: Judy, Beverly, Josh, Josh Jr., Fern

fast, finger-picking style of his home region elevated that style to celebrated heights and he became a role model for future blues men. White's voice, unlike the rough and scratchy voice of many of the blues men of his era, was a sweet baritone, capable of intensely lyrical phrasing. He sang in a story-telling style, lifting up passages that he thought important, and early on began featuring songs with social messages.

White moved to New York in 1932 and became a professional musician, earning a living as a guitarist and singer. By April of that year he had garnered a recording contract with Banner Records and began recording blues and folk songs. He worked with pianist Clarence Williams and recorded such songs as "Black and Evil Blues" and "Lazy Black Snake Blues," both in 1932. It is not widely known, but White had recorded under his own name as guitar soloist on a record entitled *Wang Wang Harmonica Blues* by the *Carver Boys & Joshua White* in 1929. The 1932 recordings, however, featured a singing Joshua White, and with these, he was on his way to establishing a national career.

Unable to forget his home and church upbringing, White recorded several Christian/Gospel songs in 1933, 1934 and 1935 as *Joshua White - The Christian Singer*. Recording with an unknown pianist and accompanying himself on guitar, White sang such favorites as "Jesus Gonna Make Up My Dying Bed," "There's A Man Goin' Around Takin' Names" and "Four and Twenty Elders." If White's blues and folk song recordings show a passionate and declamatory singer, his recordings of sacred music present a committed believer who almost pleads with the listener for understanding. White recorded twenty-four sacred songs between 1933 and 1935, and while he is best known as a blues and folk singer, his recordings of these sacred songs are some of the most powerful in his discography.

By the late 1930s, White had changed his first name to Josh (though he continued to record secular songs under the name of *Joshua White* and *Pinewood*

Tom) and had established a solid career as a solo performer. His strong religious background, and his deep belief in freedom for all, continued to pervade his work. In 1939, White shared the stage with Paul Robeson in the show *John Henry*. This was the Josh White who was invited to present a concert at the Library of Congress with the Golden Gate Quartet.

The Concert, Part One: Spirituals

In the 1940s it was, as it is in 2001, rare for African Americans who perform sacred music and secular music to be presented at the same venue. When they were presented together it was because the musician performing sacred music made a concession, for in the African American religious community there has always been a strong belief that such a coupling was *unequally yoked*. Typically, many gospel singers will not perform with or on the same bill with secular music artists as they believe that they - the gospel singers - are "of" the world but not "in" the world.

From a social and musical standpoint, the Gates and Josh White were equally yoked, the proof consisting of the present never-before released recording. From a spiritual standpoint, the Gates and White elevated African American music to new heights on the evening of this concert, December 20, 1940. In a curious way, the coupling of these artists may have been fortuitous, for the Golden Gate Quartet increasingly withdrew from the black church and in short order was performing exclusively in secular music venues, while White, after affiliating with a group of white protest music singers called the Almanac Singers, began to feature such songs in his concerts as *Amazing Grace* and *Come By Here, Lord*.

The Library of Congress concert was divided into three parts, with part one dedicated to Negro Spirituals and commentary by Dr. Alain Locke. Part two was

given to Blues and Ballads, with commentary by Sterling Brown, and the final section surveyed Reels and Work Songs, with Alan Lomax as commentator.

The first musical sounds we hear (track 1) are that of tenor Henry Owens, employing a well-modulated tone, singing the single word *freedom*. As soon as he utters the word, the other three singers join him in rich harmony:

Oh, freedom, chillun
Freedom over me, hallelujah;
And before I'll be a slave I'll be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord, and be free.

The seriousness of this Spiritual is evident in this arrangement: two choruses of simple, unadorned melody harmonized in simple and direct chords. The delivery, however, is steeped in confidence and pride and the Gates sing the song the way that it must have been sung that day in 1865 when, with the enactment of the thirteenth amendment, those African Americans still in slavery knew that *slavery had been abolished throughout the United States*. Alain Locke, the influential professor of philosophy at Howard University, follows with a concise statement about the Negro Spiritual (track 2), highlighting not only its importance to African American culture but also to American life.

While the song *Freedom* shows the lyrical and harmonic side of the Gates, *Noah* (track 3) illustrates their highly refined rhythmic and declamatory style. To emphasize the significance of the narrative the Gates construct a bridge from the chorus to the verse by interpolating a vamp using the phrase *God's gonna ride on the rain and tide (and/or the raining time)*. Over several repetitions of this phrase, the voices are treated as drums and punctuate the sound with percussive attacks. Using lyrics instead of neutral sounds, the soloist

hums a few riffs, calls on Noah, and finally bursts into the story of Noah and the flood. The vamp in this performance became the most popular device associated with the Gates, what Willie Johnson termed *vocal percussion*. Always found in their rhythmic-narrative spirituals, this device is also employed in the quartet's performances of *Traveling Shoes* and *Run, Sinner, Run*.

Jubilee style is epitomized by the sweetness, simple but sufficient harmony and close blending found in the "prayer meeting" Spiritual *I'm So Glad Trouble Don't Last Always* (track 4). Absent are the punctuated rhythms, rumbling hums and snatched lyrics of the rhythmic-narrative spiritual *Noah*, and in their place is a concerted voice in mournful gratitude for what is hoped will be a light at the end of the journey. This is performed in only one chorus, also the time allotted to the popular spiritual of determination, *We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder* (track 5). A single voice opens the song and is joined by the ensemble, humming. By the second phrase all voices are singing with the sincerity and determination of their ancestors. This spiritual, like *Oh Mary, Don't You Weep* (track 6), combines elements of the Old Testament (Jacob) with those of the New (the cross, symbol of Christ) without any difficulty.

The first published report of *Go Down, Moses*, the most popular of all freedom spirituals, appeared in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* of October 12, 1861. Twenty verses of the text were published, and while the Gates offer a rendition of only two of these, the sentiment that they are able to pack into such a short span speaks to their artistry. The soloist delivers the first phrase almost as a fanfare: *Go Down, Moses, Way Down in Egypt Land*. The other three voices join him in unison and sing to the end, easing into the final word "go" in full harmony. As they continue, the soloist begins the second half of the song, avoiding the customary break; the background voices sustain a chord throughout the phrase, providing a sheet of beautiful sound. The final phrase of this

verse is given over to bass Orlandus Wilson, who slowly intones each word to the depths of his range. The Gates then alternate unison with harmony until the end when they all voice the final chord together in perfect harmony. Of particular interest in this arrangement is the second verse in which the death of Moses is discussed, a verse not included in the published version.

Oh Mary, Don't You Weep is introduced with a mournful cry, a voice in sorrow for "weeping Mary." Her pain is captured in the intense style of humming that church people call *moaning* and is over momentarily, with the group joining for a jubilee version of the song. The jubilee spiritual differs from the shout or rhythmic-narrative spiritual in that the jubilee spiritual is slower, seldom has a leader, and generally tells no story. With the entire group singing in mid-register, the Gates rumble through the chorus admonishing Mary, as she stood at the cross on which Christ was nailed, to refrain from crying. If the Lord could save the children of Israel by drowning Pharaoh's army - The Quartet adds a "d" to the past tense of drown to provide the hard consonant that the rhythm required - he could certainly save Christ. This particular verse, always associated with this song, but completely unrelated to the story, is one of the many "wandering couplets" that the slaves employed to lend variety and interest to songs that were composed only of refrains. The Gates even snatch a few words in this performance, giving the song a veneer of the rhythmic-narrative spiritual.

The first part of the concert was brought to a close with the rhythmic-narrative spiritual, *Traveling Shoes* (Track 7). All of the devices and techniques employed in their performance of *Noah* are employed here. The reiteration of the words "traveling shoes" throughout the performance suggests that death has finally persuaded the sinner man to travel. This idea, however, is dispelled when the "wobbling" of the Gates voices is heard on the last word of the song, signifying the sinner man standing still even though pulled by death.

The Concert, Part Two: Blues and Ballads

Blues singer and pianist Leroy Carr had no idea in 1928 when he and his guitarist, Scrapper Blackwell, wrote *How Long Has That Evening Train Been Gone?* (Track 8), that it, like *St. Louis Blues*, would become one of the classic blues found in every blues singer's repertoire. Recorded first by Carr in 1928 and again in 1932, this blues still enjoyed great popularity in 1940, and White's performance of it as his opening selection in the concert holds its own against the original version by Carr. White introduces the song by playing a full chorus on the guitar, illustrating why he enjoyed the reputation of a virtuoso instrumentalist. Alternating powerful strumming with soulful finger picking in the *crying* style that would soon make B. B. King famous, White sets the mood for his unusual performance of this song. Instead of a slightly angry attitude at having missed the train that one hears in many performances, White's gentle vocal timbre and delivery project an air of regret and sorrow at having, once again, suffered misfortune. This attitude is further suggested in his reference to the infamous mountain jack and longing for *his baby*. Of course, as Sterling Brown will later confirm, the word train, in the title, represents painful longing for travel to a better situation. Equally as interesting as White's performance is the fact that *How Long Has That Evening Train Been Gone?* is an authentic blues—not the 12-bar blues found in Billie Holiday's *Fine and Mellow*, but the 8-bar blues found in *Stagolee* and *Lawdy Miss Clawdy*, one of the several types of blues popular before World War II.

Poet, professor and scholar, and one of the few academics of his era to champion the blues, Sterling Brown follows White's song with one of the most brilliant discussions of the blues ever recorded (Track 9). Covering definitions, descriptions, themes and categories, Brown places the blues and the folk songs

that were to follow, in a perspective that gives them both light and relevance.

The Gates and White, with White as a guitarist not a singer, join forces in *Poor Lazarus* (track 10). This is not the *Lazarus*, brother of Mary and Martha whom Christ raised from the dead, nor Lazarus, the diseased beggar of the parable of the rich man and the beggar, but Lazarus, the bad man. Like other black bad men, swift-footed fugitives who are celebrated in ballads - full fledged story songs - such as *Stagolee*, who murdered a man who stole his Stetson hat, and *John Hardy*, who killed a man at the gambling table, this *Lazarus* was accused of breaking into and robbing the commissary. He made a valiant attempt to flee but was caught by the deputies between two mountains and shot. Guilty or not *Lazarus* paid the ultimate and personal price because even his own dear Mother could not attend his funeral; she had no shoes to wear. The Gates offer an authentic folk performance of the ballad. They are men working in a field, sitting on a porch or riding on the back of a truck, singing according to their own delight and involvement. White provides just enough guitar accompaniment to support the singing of this fascinating ballad.

The most famous ballad of an African American, *John Henry* (track 11), features the two forces joined as singers, accompanied by White on the guitar. White is soloist on the first verse, and the drama unfolds with a soloist from the Gates alternating with White on the remaining verses. The other Gates assume the role of church congregation and cry out commentary, joining in on the final sentence of each verse. John Henry looms larger than life in this rousing performance.

Silicosis, a chronic and deadly disease of the lungs caused by the continued inhaling of silica dust, is the theme of a blues composed by Josh White. Delivered in five stanzas of commentary on the life of the miner, where one earns only "six bits" daily and death is the final prize, *Silicosis Blues* (track 13) presents White adopting themes of social consciousness, a genre for which he

would become famous from the late 1950s until his death. While the subject of this blues is pitiable, White, the town crier, eschews pity, offering a soulful and beautiful reading of what was a horrible fact of life for many workers.

White's social consciousness goes even further in his next selection, *Trouble* (track 14), which he calls a 'censored song'. *Trouble* is not only a bold exposé of the trials and tribulations of being a black man in America, but more importantly announces a jail break, where whether the prize is freedom or death, there will ultimately be a change. Usually sung on chain gangs or convict farms in the absence of persons of authority, and heretofore seldom sung in concerts, White offers a stirring rendition of a song that is a combination ballad and blues, supported by background humming by the Gates.

Part Three: Reels and Work Songs

The final part of the concert was dedicated to reels—the dance songs of the rural black people. Also included were work songs, principally railroad songs, sea chanteys, and turpentine camp hollers. The commentator for this part of the program was Alan Lomax, folk song collector and scholar. Lomax, and his father, John Lomax, were the principal collectors of African American folk music of this era. The Lomaxes' association with railroad workers and convicts yielded the invaluable preservation of much fascinating aural history from these groups.

Presenting this part of the concert as an expanded skit, Willie Johnson of the Gates offers a Juba recitation (track 15). A dance hand-clap and recitation, Juba was a favorite slave activity during the antebellum period (interestingly, there was a black professional minstrel, William Henry Lane, a dancer and singer, called Juba). Originated when fiddlers grew tired of playing, slaves provided

their own music through foot tapping, hand clapping and thigh slapping, all in precise rhythm. Eventually they added a recitation to the rhythm in the form of rhyming couplets:

Juba dis, Juba dat,
Juba killed a yeller cat.

Johnson not only captures the rhythmic articulation associated with the rhyming but does so with the vocal timbre associated with the practice. The Juba recitation illustrates the first recorded example of black men rhyming in public, a favorite pastime since then. This practice was followed by the famous Hambone recitation and thigh slapping, then the Dozens, a vocal game in which men insulted each other's mothers to determine the fighting level of the participants, followed by the Last Poets of the 1960s and the Rap artists of recent times.

The Buck and Wing, a complicated, fast tap dance, sometimes known as "buckdancing," was one of the slave dances that was incorporated into minstrel shows. Equally as important as the steps of the dance were the accompanying songs. Dan Emmett, composer of *Dixie*, mastered the slave's melodic, rhythmic and textual schemes in most of his minstrel songs, especially in songs like *Old Dan Tucker* (track 16). With White on the guitar, the Gates offer three verses and as many choruses in an infectiously rhythmic performance which will have listeners patting their feet in time with the beat.

During slavery, and beyond, African Americans created songs involving animals who are pitted against the slave master or the boss. A favorite animal was the rabbit (slave) who always outsmarted the fox (boss) to the delight of the listeners and on lookers. With *Mr. Rabbit*, *Mr. Rabbit Your Ear's Mighty Long*

(*Every Little Soul Must Shine*) (track 18), the performers begin a vocal - and in some cases - physical dramatization of songs with music and dialogue. The length of the ears referred to in the title speaks to the extrasensory perception and cunning wit possessed by the slaves and rural black workers of the early twentieth century. The scenario of the delightful *Mr. Rabbit* has the rabbits and dogs agreeing that the dogs will no longer chase the rabbits. This agreement is to be celebrated at a dinner at the home of the dog. On the way to the dog's house for dinner the rabbit (Henry Owens) hears barking dogs in the distance, and despite the pleas from his companion dog (Willie Johnson), smartly declines the invitation and goes on his way, unharmed.

Next, Alan Lomax takes the audience to a railroad work camp (track 19 and 20), guiding them through a day of labor beginning as the camp cook wakes the workers. In these camps communications were most often sung. In this *Gandy Dancers* skit (*Gandy* from the worker's gait in using a tamping bar along a railroad track; *Dancers* from black railroad workers who sang as they worked or "danced"), the cook awakens the men with a chant detailing the breakfast menu, advising them that if they don't appear in the dining area immediately, they "won't git nuttin." After breakfast the men are directed to unload a shipment of steel rails and admonished to be careful lest someone gets a "leg broke" (*Raise Up, Boys*). The workers are then directed to spike the rails down into the track. For this activity they had a special song, as every physical movement involved in a task required a song that incorporated a melodic and rhythmic accompaniment to that movement (*O Lula*). The next job the workers had to do was to line the tracks up so that the train could travel without sudden jerks. This was accompanied by the popular song, *Oh Boys, Can't You Line 'Em?*, with its accompanying rap, rap rhythmic fills. As the train passed over the new track it deposited gravel to be placed around the tracks so that it would stay straight. As the

men packed the gravel around the rails they sang *T. P. in the Morning*.

This extraordinary concert closes with the signature sound of the Gates, this time accompanied by Josh White on the guitar, in a rousing performance of *Rock My Soul In The Bosom Of Abraham* (track 22). In this toe-tapping spiritual, all of the glories of the technique and skills that were first attempted in Eddie Griffin's barbershop, developed in the churches of Norfolk and refined on radio stations in South and North Carolina in the decade following - yes, that glorious *vocal percussion* - backed up by Josh White's guitar, spilled out into the halls of the Library of Congress. And if that were not enough the entire company encored with more of the same on *Run, Sinner, Run* (track 23). This concert was not only a tribute to the thirteenth amendment and African American culture and music, but also to the people of the United States.

An Afterword

Two years before this concert, the Gates had relocated to New York City and had begun a Sunday morning national broadcast on CBS radio. They were heard throughout the United States and became the most famous quartet specializing in religious music in the country. In 1941 they became the first black group to sing at a presidential inaugural gala when they performed at Washington's Constitution Hall for the inauguration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Two of their most popular recordings were *No Segregation In Heaven* and *Stalin Wasn't Stallin'*. In the late 1940s the Gates toured with swing bands, playing to packed houses. They went on to make cameo appearances in several Hollywood films, including *Star Spangled Rhythm* and *Hollywood Canteen*. They made their first European tour in 1955 to huge acclaim, began record-

ing in Paris and soon thereafter made France their home, appearing throughout Europe.

In 1932 Josh White moved to New York and began to make a living as a professional guitarist and singer. He recorded extensively and was fulfilling a long term engagement at Café Society Downtown with a group he called the Josh White Singers when he was invited to perform at the Library of Congress. After the 1940 Library concert, White made several concert tours of Europe but kept New York as his home base. Early in 1941 the folk singer Pete Seeger assembled a group of folk singers who were active in New York. Among these singers were Lee Hays, Peter Hawes, Bess Lomax, and occasionally Woody Guthrie. White was asked to join this group and he accepted the invitation. The group, calling themselves the Almanac Singers, had as their principal causes support of the labor unions and opposition to war. White became a principal member of the group and continued to perform with them, off and on, into the very popular folk movement of the 1960s.

During World War II White appeared on radio programs sponsored by the Office of War Information. He went on a State Department tour in Mexico with the Gates and performed with Paul Robeson in the 1944 radio operetta *The Man Who Went To War*. After denying communist sympathies before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1950, he made numerous tours to England, France, Italy and Australia, all the while remaining active on the folk music scene in the United States. In the middle 1960s White turned to protest songs and recorded several albums before a 1966 automobile accident forced him to retire.

Now, over sixty years after that Friday evening in 1940, the world can hear the great music performed at the Library of Congress by the Golden Gate Quartet and Josh White.

-HCB

Alan Lomax

Alan Lomax was still a teenager when he began making field expeditions with his folk song-collecting father, John A. Lomax. John had published his ground-breaking *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (1910) before Alan was born; together they published *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (1934), *Our Singing Country* (1941), and *Folk Song USA* (1948), and Alan, on his own, published *The Folk Songs of North America* (1960) and many other books. The Lomaxes lectured and produced concerts of traditional music, bringing outstanding artists to new audiences, including blues legend Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter. Alan hosted and produced a series of CBS radio broadcasts in New York for "Columbia's School of the Air," on which he sang himself and presented performers such as Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, and the Golden Gate Quartet. For both father and son, publication and presentation were an important element for folk life documentation, and through these efforts awareness of America's folk heritage greatly increased.

In 1933, the Lomaxes began a mutually beneficial ten-year association with the Library of Congress. In 1928, the Library had established an Archive of American Folk Song, under the direction of Robert W. Gordon, and in its *Annual Report* for that year the Library acknowledged the "pressing need for the formation of a great centralized collection of American folk-songs." Alan Lomax became the Archive's first federally funded staff member (1936), and served as "assistant in charge: (1937-1942), often working in partnership with his father, who worked for a dollar a year plus some expenses. He made collecting expeditions for the Library; produced a series of documentary folk music albums entitled *Folk Music of the United States*; conducted interviews with a host of traditional performers from diverse cultures; and, over the years, introduced Washington audiences to these outstanding folk musicians, including the Golden Gate Quartet.

In 1978, the Archive (now known as the Archive of Folk Culture) became an integral part of the American Folklife Center, which was established by Congress in 1976. Today the Archive comprises more than two thousand collections with over two million items. The collections document and preserve every form of traditional

cultural expression—folksong, oral narratives, dance, folk art, vernacular architecture, ritual and belief, foodways and community customs and celebrations. True to the spirit of its founders, the great heritage of American traditional culture has found a home in "the national library of the United States" through the American Folklife Center.

On their first field trip, the Lomaxes used a portable, wind-up cylinder recorder donated by the widow of Thomas Edison. On subsequent trips, they used a 350-pound behemoth that cut aluminum 78 rpm discs provided by the Library of Congress. The backseat of their car was ripped out to accommodate this machine. By the late 1930s, the Lomaxes were using the newer portable acetate-cutting machines then on the market - which weighed a mere 150 pounds or so. Those early machines were designed and built by engineers commissioned by the Library, as no such machines were available commercially at that time. The discs that they recorded in those years are now archived at the Library of Congress.

-Peggy Bulger, Director, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Alain Locke

Alain Locke was born in Philadelphia in 1886. He graduated from Harvard University in 1907 and became the first black Rhodes scholar. Locke attended Oxford from 1907 to 1910 and the University of Berlin from 1910 to 1911. Returning to the United States, he joined the faculty of Howard University as Professor of English, Philosophy and Pedagogy. Locke received his doctorate from Harvard in 1918, and became well known as a spokesman for the African American community following the 1925 publication of *The New Negro*, an anthology of writings by African Americans.

Locke encouraged black artists and musicians to explore their African roots, calling himself "a philosophical midwife to a generation of younger Negro poets, writers and artists." Through his work, the Harlem Renaissance movement rose to national prominence. Locke was the author and editor of numerous books and magazines about black life and culture. He taught at Howard University for 40 years, and died in 1954.

Sterling Brown

Sterling Brown was born in 1901 on the campus of Howard University, where his father was a professor of religion. He would return as a member of the faculty in 1929, and remain a significant figure in the cultural life of the university, and of the city of Washington, for almost six decades. Brown received a Bachelor's degree from Williams College and in 1923, earned a Master's degree in English from Harvard University. After Harvard, Brown began teaching at a number of Negro colleges, including the Virginia Seminary and College, Lincoln University (Missouri), and Fisk University.

In 1932 Brown published his first book of poems, *Southern Road*. Brown's poetry was influenced by the African American vernacular, as observed in speech and folk music. Like Langston Hughes and other poets of the Harlem Renaissance, his writing expresses his concerns about the plight of the Negro in America. With the arrival of the Great Depression, Brown could not find a publisher for his second book of verse and turned to writing essays and his teaching career at Howard. With Arthur P. Davis and Ulysses Lee, Brown edited *The Negro Caravan*, the literary anthology that served as a comprehensive statement of African American literary production for the next 35 years. In 1975, Brown published his second book of poetry, *The Last Ride of Wild Bill*. He is much admired for his portraits of black people and their experiences, and the incorporation of African American folklore and modern idioms into his work. Sterling Brown died in 1989 in Takoma Park, Maryland.

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Cover photograph of the Golden Gate Quartet (from left: Orlandus Wilson, Henry Owens, Willie (Bill) Johnson, Clyde Riddick), courtesy of Orlandus Wilson, colorization by Alexis Napolliello; photograph of Josh White and the Golden Gate Quartet at Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Inaugural Ball, January 1941, from the Atlanta Daily World, used by permission; tray photograph of Josh White standing with guitar, by Albert A. Freeman, courtesy, the Josh White family; photograph of the singing White family at home, courtesy the Josh White family.

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