

The Negro Music Journal (1902-1903)

The Negro Music Journal: A Monthly Magazine Devoted to the Educational Interest of the Negro Race in Music [NMJ] was published in fifteen monthly issues from September 1902 to November 1903 in Washington, D.C. Vol. I, no. 1 through no. 3 was published by T. Edward Clifford.¹ Thereafter, a publisher is not identified. The journal's office was located at 111 D Street, Southeast, Washington, D.C.

The pages of all issues measure 5 1/4 x 8 1/2 inches. The first four issues are printed in two-column format; and those that follow in a single-column format. The first six issues are sixteen pages in length, plus two or four unnumbered advertising pages. Each of the remaining issues comprises twenty-two pages, also with two or four additional unnumbered advertising pages. The pages of Volumes I and II are numbered consecutively, each beginning on page one.² Despite optimistic comments about future issues, and offers of premiums for subscribers, the journal ceased publication without warning in November 1903.

J. Hillary Taylor, the journal's founder and only editor, was a pianist, a teacher of pianoforte and music history, and was associated with the Washington Conservatory of Music,³ founded in the autumn of 1903 and located at 12th and U Streets, Northwest in Washington, D.C.⁴ Taylor was an extremely conservative musician who extolled the moral virtues of progress in music performance and knowledge through disciplined practice of the repertory of the European tradition. In fact, in an editorial the journal cautions readers against the derogatory effects of "coon songs" and "ragtime"⁵ and outlines steps for self-improvement in music for Negroes. Agnes Carrol, a music educator and a frequent contributor served as Assistant Editor. Like Taylor, Carrol also based her views about the study of music for Negro students on European traditions.

The journal's first four issues consist of a string of articles on musical topics without a pre-determined order of presentation. However, beginning with Vol. I, no. 5, a regular order is instituted and maintained until the final issue. First appear three articles on a variety of musical topics. These are followed by three different sets of ongoing articles, all dealing with aspects of musical study and performance; namely, the Piano Department by J. Hillary Taylor, the Violin Department by Clarence C. White and the Club Department by Agnes Carrol. These departments present methods for the study of piano, violin, music theory and music history. Interspersed between the Departments' series are articles about Negro musicians and poems. An editorial dealing with current issues and

¹ This firm was located at 301 Seventh Street, South Washington, D.C.

² In the present publication, page numbers within brackets have been supplied for unnumbered pages.

³ The founding of the Washington Conservatory of Music is reported in NMJ II, no. 14 (October 1903): 28-32 and 47-48, and II, no. 15 (November 1903): 75-76.

⁴ See NMJ, Vol. II, no. 15 (November 1903) page 79 for Taylor's professional advertisement.

⁵ See [J. Hillary Taylor], Editorial, NMJ I, no. 7 (March 1903): 137-39.

"Musical Notes"—a calendar of local and out-of-town musical performances by Negro musicians—conclude each issue. Most of the articles are informative and explore practical matters of performance.

Biographical sketches of important and successful Negro musicians, including Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912), composer of the *Hiawatha Trilogy* and other large-scale choral works,⁶ are featured in several issues. Agnes Carrol recounts the singing career of the contralto Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield in Europe and American, and the support she received from the Buffalo Musical Association and Harriet Beecher Stowe in assisting Greenfield's efforts to receive recognition.⁷ The Negro violinist Clarence Cameron White contributes a two-part article dealing with the musical lives of several Negro singers including Rachel Walker, Azalia Hackley and Annie Cook.⁸ Other articles treat Thomas Wiggins (better known as "Blind Tom")—a mid nineteenth-century virtuoso pianist of outstanding ability—and the Jubilee Singers of Fiske University. Also treated are the successes of several other established Negro musicians and organizations.⁹

Considerable attention is given to the efforts of baritone Theodore Drury to establish an American Negro opera company in New York, and to secure a theater for opera performances by Negro singers.¹⁰ A successful English-language performance of Verdi's *Aida* by Drury's company (almost entirely made up of Negro performers and artists) at the Lexington Theater in New York City receives ample space in the journal's pages with reviews reprinted from *The Colored American* and the *New York Herald*.¹¹

Performances by American Negro singers are a regular feature of the journal's reviews. There are also reviews of concerts given by several Negro instrumentalists and recitals by young musicians studying at the Washington Conservatory of Music. Organs, organists and organ openings are also features of the musical life related in the journal.

Several photographs of active Negro musicians—Clarence Cameron White (violinist), W. Thomas Adams (writer, orator and musician), Azalia Hackley (singer and teacher), and J. Hillary Taylor (pianist and teacher, editor)—and the recently established Washington Conservatory of Music are included in the journal.

⁶ H. J. Storer, "Samuel Coleridge-Taylor," NMJ I, no. 1 (September 1902): 3-4.

⁷ Agnes Caroll, "Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield," NMJ, I no. 2 (October 1902): 18-19.

⁸ Clarence Cameron White, "The American Negro in Music: Later Generation," NMJ I, no. 4 (December 1902): 56-60, and I, no. 5 (January 1903): 69-70.

⁹ Annie Louise Harper, "Music, and Negro Musicians," NMJ I, no. 5 (January 1903): 69-70.

¹⁰ Drury floated stock to establish this enterprise. See [J. Hillary Taylor], "Editorial," NMJ I, no. 6 (February 1903): 111-13.

¹¹ See "Press Comment on *Aida*," NMJ I, no. 10 (June 1903): 202-03.