

Foreword

The poem *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing* was created c.1900 by American poet, author, educator, lawyer, diplomat, and civil rights activist James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) and set to music by his brother, noted composer and singer, John Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954).

When James Weldon Johnson was asked to speak for the commemorative birthday celebration of former President Abraham Lincoln, instead of delivering one of his characteristic inspirational speeches, he chose to present *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing*. The song was performed by a chorus of 500 schoolchildren on February 12th, 1900 in Jacksonville, Florida. Over the next 20 years, these same 500 children shared the song with others and it began to spread throughout the South and gained rapid attention.

By 1920, the song became so popular that it was christened as the official song of the NAACP and is still widely known as the *Black National Anthem* or *Hymn*. After history was made more than 115 years ago, this song continues to inspire hope and encouragement to people of all generations and cultures.

My hope is that you enjoy this arrangement and continue to be inspired.

Notes to the harpist:

In the introduction of the accompaniment, the chord in bar 140 should be freely arpeggiated as an ascending and descending line, with the descent ending on the last 4 notes of the *rit.*

As this piece is sung and interpreted in many ways, adjustments may be made in order to cater to the vocalists. (For example: bar 169 may be omitted in order to accelerate the flow of the verses, and bar 187 is often held as a fermata.)

In bars 174-176 and 182-184, the right hand may be played as single notes instead of octaves for swifter tempos.

Lift Ev'ry Voice & Sing

for solo harp and optional accompaniment

by John Rosamond Johnson
arranged by Brandee Younger

Stately

Musical notation for the first system, measures 1-8. The piece is in 3/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The first measure starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The notation includes a treble clef and a bass clef. A plus sign (+) is located below the bass staff at the end of the system.

Musical notation for the second system, measures 9-16. The notation includes a treble clef and a bass clef. A plus sign (+) is located below the bass staff at the beginning of the system.

Musical notation for the third system, measures 17-24. The notation includes a treble clef and a bass clef.

Musical notation for the fourth system, measures 25-32. The notation includes a treble clef and a bass clef.