



American Spiritual Ensemble

*“Premiere Cultural Ambassadors
of the American Negro Spirituals”*

Overview 2012
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About ASE

The American Spiritual Ensemble (ASE) is composed of some of the finest classically trained vocalists in the United States. The ASE roster of over 100 singers includes New York Metropolitan Opera soloists, New York Broadway veterans and over 10 professors of voice from colleges and universities across United States.

The group was founded in 1995 by Dr. Everett McCorvey and has given over 500 performances around the globe including over 100 concerts in Spain (14 tours), China, Ireland, Ecuador, Poland and Brazil. ASE tours with 21 – 30 performers and staff and performs full concert programs of classically arranged spirituals. The ASE concert program can be customized to also include Broadway, Jazz and Operatic selections.

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Mission

The mission of ASE is to aid in the preservation of the American Negro Spiritual . Through the ongoing live presentation and recording of this American folk music, the classically trained voices of ASE beautifully capture the haunting genius of these folk melodies. The gifted musicians in the ensemble travel across the globe performing concerts, lecture demonstrations and master class instruction for educational institutions, religious institutions and premier concert halls.



Concert Performance Formats*

- Spiritual Concert (2 hours with intermission)
 - Classical arrangements of American Negro Spirituals
- Broadway (2 hours with intermission)
 - Shows which highlight the African American experience or which highlight human triumph through spiritual faith
- Spirituals and Broadway (2 hours with intermission)
 - A combination of the above 2 show formats
 - May also include jazz works
- Jazz (2 hours with intermission)
 - Jazz music composed, arranged or made famous by African American artists
- Opera (2 hours with intermission)
 - Highly recognized and audience favorite operatic arias, duets and choral repertoire

* All concert engagements can be partnered with ASE lecture demonstrations, master classes and/or community choral workshops



Sample Past Performance Venues

- Performing Arts Center
 - John F. Kennedy Center for the Arts, Washington, D.C.
 - Escorial, Madrid, Spain
 - Santander Music Festival, Santander, Spain
 - Warsaw Philharmonic, Warsaw, Poland
 - FEI Alltech 2010 World Equestrian Games (Opening Ceremony), Lexington, KY
 - Lincoln 200th Birthday Tribute, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
 - Niswonger Auditorium, Van Wert, OH
 - American Choral Directors Regional Conference, Memphis, TN
 - National Choral Directors Conference, Fargo, ND
 - Association of Performing Artist Presenters (Featured performance group), Norfolk, VA
 - Warren Performing Arts Center, Indianapolis, IN
- Religious Institutions
 - St. Peter in Chains Cathedral, Cincinnati, Ohio
 - First Presbyterian Church, Lexington, KY
 - Hutterite Community, Farmington, WV
 - Riverside Church, New York, NY
 - Northminster Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis, IN
 - Temple Adath Isreal, Lexington, KY
 - Academy of Preachers, National Conference, Featured Guest, Atlanta, GA
- Colleges & Universities
 - Centre College, Danville, KY
 - Miami University, Oxford, OH (Cromer Flory Artist in Residence)
 - Dennison University, Granville, OH
 - Bob Jones University, Greenville, SC
 - Salisbury University, Salisbury, MD
 - College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA
 - University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS
 - University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL
 - Western Carolina University, Winston Salem, NC

Visiting Artists

- Vocal Coaching
 - Diction, Languages, Musical Styles
- Voice Professor
 - Vocal Technique & Master Classes
- Guest “Leading Lady / Leading Man”
 - Opera & Musical Theatre Productions
- Guest Stage Director
 - Opera, Musical Theatre, Musical Galas
- Guest Music Director
 - Opera, Musical Theatre, Musical Galas
- Interim & Guest Choral Directors
 - Colleges and Universities
 - Religious institutions





About Spirituals

Spirituals are the folk songs of the American Negro Slave. When Africans were brought to America as slaves, they lost their traditional music as well as their freedom. They added African chants, rhythms and harmonies to the Christian songs they learned and created spirituals. Today, people sing spirituals to raise their spirits, strengthen their faith, and create a sense of community.



Spirituals Came to Serve Many Purposes for the Slaves

- **Work**—Singing spirituals made work less boring and set a rhythm for actions like picking or digging. Slave owners liked the singing because it made the slaves more productive.
- **Worship**—At night, after the owners were asleep, the slaves would go out into the woods (their invisible church) and worship. Spirituals were a big part of their religious ceremony.
- **Entertainment**—At the end of a long day, slaves would often sing spirituals for relaxation.
- **Code Songs**—Communication through spirituals, often helped slaves escape. For example, a hidden message in the song “Deep River” led to a meeting at the river. “Wade in the Water” warned an escaped slave to go into the river so bloodhounds couldn’t follow his scent.



Types of Spirituals

Sorrow songs are sung slowly and sadly and tell of the heavy burden of slavery and the belief that better days are coming.

Jubilees are faster, upbeat songs based on Bible stories celebrating victory and joy.



Spiritual Arrangements

Over the years, the spiritual melodies created by the American Negro slaves have been recognized for their purity and beauty. These melodies have been arranged into several musical formats including:

- **Classical**
- Gospel
- Contemporary Christian
- Broadway

The singers in ASE are classically trained musicians. The repertoire presented by ASE is primarily **classical** in format. Many programs presented by ASE include Broadway arrangements.