# Gary Bachlund Echoes from the Cabin

Texts of James Edwin Campbell

FOR MEDIUM VOICE AND PIANO

2006

www.bachlund.org

# Echoes from the Cabin

Five Songs for High Voice

James Edwin Campbell (c. 1862-c.1902)

Gary Bachlund

\* See "Notes" at the back of this score





Echoes from the Cabin 3 19 ring! an' froo de fiel', my bawn-jer, Den hits roun' de hill ring, Look out dar, nig-gah, doan' you steal! De mil-yuns dem vines De am green. on 23 moon am bright, O you'll be seen! Ring, my bawn-jer, Ring, ring!\_ my bawn-jer, ring!\_ Ring! **ff** 23 II 2006 Nancy

circa 1' 20"















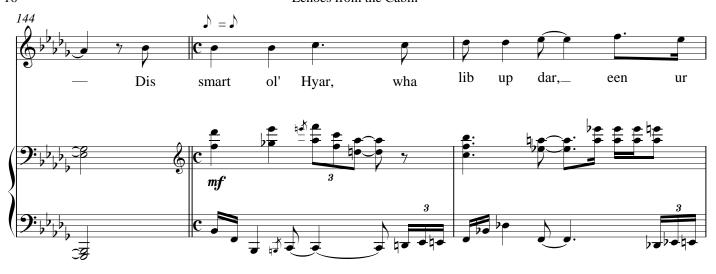


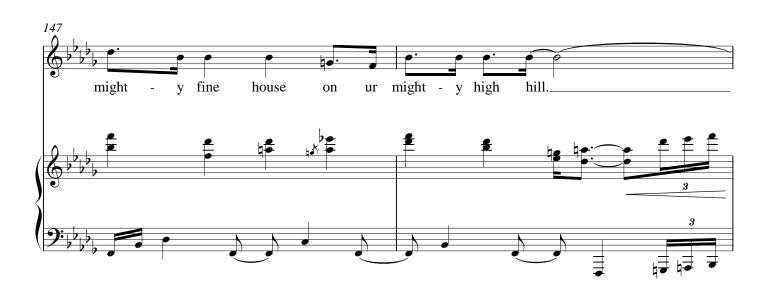


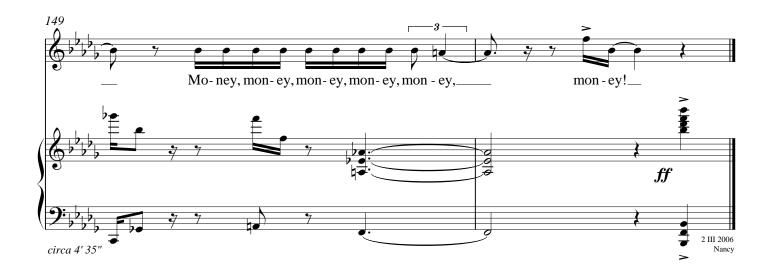












## When ol' Sis' Judy pray



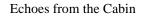
















## Negro Serenade









circa 2' 20"

## De Cunjah Man





Echoes from the Cabin







### **Echoes from the Cabin**

**Notes** 

James Edwin Campbell (1867-1896) was a black American poet, editor, short story writer and educator who



came from Ohio. According to James Weldon Johnson, there is little known about his early life which was kept private. He attended public schools in Pomeroy, studies at Miami College, Ohio, and wrote regularly for daily Chicago newspapers in Chicago. Campbell took part in a group publication, the *Four O'Clock Magazine*, a popular literary magazine, and was also President of West Virginia Colored Institute (now West Virginia State College). His collection, *Driftings and Gleanings*, was published in 1887. *Echoes from the Cabin and Elsewhere* was published in 1895 by Donohue & Henneberry, Chicago. These poems were republished in an

anthology, *The Book of American Negro Poetry: chosen and edited, with an essay on the Negro's creative genius,* by James Weldon Johnson, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922.

The following is excerpted from James Johnson's Preface to the 1922 collection of poetry which he edited, and in which he wrote the forward titled, "The Negro's Creative Genius."

The status of the Negro in the United States is more a question of national mental attitude toward the race than of actual conditions. And nothing will do more to change that mental attitude and raise his status than a demonstration of intellectual parity by the Negro through the production of literature and art.

Is there likelihood that the American Negro will be able to do this? There is, for the good reason that he possesses the innate powers. He has the emotional endowment, the originality and artistic conception, and, what is more important, the power of creating that which has universal appeal and influence.

I make here what may appear to be a more startling statement by saying that the Negro has already proved the possession of these powers by being the creator of the only things artistic that have yet sprung from American soil and been universally acknowledged as distinctive American products.

If Johnson's challenge as suggested in the quote above is to be believed, and if Campbell's wonderful poems are to live in such songs as mine and hopefully others, then the social stigma of the word, "niggah," must be set aside in these art songs, and the verse be allowed its own weight and value in our time.

Campbell's poems are written in the dialect of his subjects, or the vernacular of the time, as well as standard English. The use of the now seemingly forbidden word is found in one of Campbell's poems which I chose to set. Its use was a product of the time, and not used in a pejorative manner, but rather to capture the flavor of a specific time and culture in his verse. Its place in Campbell's poetry in general and this song cycle specifically is apt, right and should not be deemed offensive for the following reason.

In setting these poems, I personally place such verse on a par with verse which I have employed for other songs settings, written by some of the world's acknowledged greats in literature. Those who may wish to disagree with this view would do well to recall that Ira Gershwin's lyrics for the seminal *Porgy and Bess* are written by an American Jewish lyricist, as were the lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein for *Showboat*. Those texts are not true "black" texts in any sense other than the use to which they are put in telling a story. Similar fallacious racial and cultural arguments can be brought to bear for Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* as for *Turandot*, as for a performer singing Verdi's title role in *Otello* or Mao in Adam's *Nixon in China*. But any such argument is surely nonsense in the long run as such arguments tend to be.

Any urge towards trends in political correctness needs be set aside in favor of the poetical art of James Edwin Campbell and editorial stance of Johnson, such that Campbell's voice is neither censored nor ridiculed. To do so would be an injustice to the art of this very original American poet, who meant by his work that the flavor and dialect of that part of the whole American tapestry which is our joint culture should not fade away, but be remembered -- and, in fact, celebrated.

Gary Bachlund - 2006