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Introduction

This research was developed during my stay at Georgia State University in Atlanta, from the month of December 2011, to the begging of May 2012. It was then finished and reviewed at Ca' Foscari University of Venice during May 2012. The whole project started with my interest on folk music. I wanted to understand and report the way in which cultures coming from different parts of the world, such as the British Isles and West Africa, mingled together creating a type of music that is distinctly American and recognizable all over the world. I chose to focalize my attention in a particular place: the Southeast. The first motivation that led me to take this choice was the fact that, in order to have access to more sources, I needed to be in the area that I was taking into consideration in my research. That is why I took advantage of my permanence in Georgia, to study the matter from a closer point of view. Another important reason is the fact that this is a peculiar place in terms of musical folklore. The Appalachian region and the Piedmont are considered the ancient core of American music, where traditional music firstly developed and than spread to the other parts of the United States.

When we think about traditional American music, we always tend to associate it with the Delta Blues. The Mississippi area is in fact very rich of folk traditions, and as Alan Lomax says in his book, it is *The Land Where The Blues Began.* That is why every time we open a magazine or a book about music traditions in the South of the United States, we are always directed to this specific area. I have been deeply fascinated by this area too, so much that I decided to write my bachelor dissertation on this topic. What I discovered during the past few months in the Southeast is that this area is not less interesting. I always liked classic country music and hillbilly, the Carter Family and Jimmy Rogers most of all. Despite this fact, as many people do, I always associated this music with what in the United States is informally called "white trash". White trash is a pejorative term used to describe the poor white people who live in the countryside or in the mountains, who did not receive an education and therefore are racist and ignorant. This term is mostly associated with the South, and in the Southeast in particular is still widely used. The association of this term with folk music does not strike me particularly. As a matter of fact, this type of music developed mostly among these groups of people, during a time in which the rural areas of the United States were deeply poor and not really advanced. Despite this fact, what we have to consider is that in many cases culture raises exactly in poor environments. Another interesting fact, which has been the key of my research, is that traditional music was not restricted only to a particular community of people. No matter how hard work was, everybody had the chance to play music in the Southeast.

This is why, a great part of the music taken into consideration in this research come from the black community and from women as well. The emphasis of this study is precisely to determine the extent by which the various communities influenced each other, to discover whether music was able to overcome racial barriers, in a place, which in fact, has always been dominated by racial disparities.

During these months Atlanta has been my reference point. That is why, to describe the development of this research, and the specific area taken into consideration I like to start from it and place this city at the center of my studies. My research then expands to other part of the Southeast. Decide which states to include and which to leave out was not an easy task. Geographically the Southeast is that area that extends from the South of Virginia to Florida, including the states not directly on the eastern coast such as West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama. Despite this fact, cultural divisions in the United States are often very different from the geographic ones. If for example, we think about the South in cultural terms, the inclusion of California and Florida will result not very appropriate. Every state has its own story and its own cultural background. Not every place culturally developed in the same period of time and in the same way. The Spanish colonization imposed a different kind of culture that, as far as music is concerned cannot be associated with the one that developed under the British domain. Florida in particular was basically divided between these two powers that influenced the cultural development of this state. As Zora Neale Hurston teaches us, Florida is very rich in terms of American folklore. As far as traditional music is concerned, this state is divided in different areas where we can find different types of music traditions. Native Americans, such as the Miccosukee and the Seminole tribes highly influenced music in this territory. Nonetheless, the major influence remains the Spanish one. That is why I decided to limit my research to the northern part of Florida, where traditions were more related to the music that developed within the English domination.

The focus of this research is Georgia, both because it is physically the center of the Southeast, and because this is the place where I had access to the sources I needed to complete my study. This said, I found it necessary to include other important states in the development of this type of music, I am particularly referring to North and South Carolina, where folk traditions are very similar to the ones developed in Georgia. Virginia, the eastern parts of Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama are also taken into consideration, because fundamental in the creation of traditional music.

The question that I kept in mind for the whole course of this thesis was: did music help to overcome racial barriers? To answer this question I started my research analyzing data on the Colonial Period. During a time in which people were struggling to survive, there was not much time to dedicate to music and leisure. Nonetheless, this did not stop the immigrants who arrived in the Southeast from shearing their cultural background. These different communities remained linked to their motherland's traditions for years, until during the course of the nineteenth century a more definite American identity took shape, and more people got interested in the music coming from the Southeast.

The emphasis of this research is on the development of ballads in the New World; the way in which these type of songs have been used in the various genres that compose folk music in the Southeast. The period taken into consideration goes from the emergence of folk music to the 1940s. The end of the Second World War marked the beginning of a new era, not only for political reasons but also as far as culture is concerned. The United States was establishing itself as the major world power. The economic growth led to a sudden change in the way people lived and spent their leisure time. Television started to be popular, urban centers such as Chicago, New York and San Francisco were growing by the day, but most of all, the majority of the musicians electrified their instruments. These kinds of changes put an end to the classic folk that until this moment had been developing mostly as an oral tradition. With the beginning of the 1950s a huge wave of interest led people like Bob Dylan, Pete Segeer, and Harry Smith to look back at this music, collecting it, covering it and emulating it. This kind of attitude, which is often considered part of the folk tradition of music, is actually just a folk revival. It had definitely a large role in the popularization and commercialization of folk music, it was also fundamental to understand the value of it as a form of art. Nevertheless, this revival did not start in rural centers but it took shape among cultured people in urban areas. This is what determines the difference between the old tradition and the late one.

Some History

Contemporary American music is composed by a large variety of music styles. All these different music styles originated in a relatively short period of time. As a matter of fact, we can say that modern American music, took shape only during the nineteenth century. This fact, is probably the consequence of the British colonization. For a long period of time, the United States was subjected to this power. The music expressions before the nineteenth century were basically a reproduction of what was popular in the British Isles. Nevertheless, the origin of folk music can be traced back to this period, when different cultures mixed together, sharing and borrowing their music background one with the other.

We possess very little data regarding music during the Colonial Period. The musical interchange between the different communities that populated this area was never formally reported. This probably happened because the musicians, who would play folk music, mostly belonging to the lower classes, they did not have access to education and therefore could not document what they were witnessing. Moreover, there were no schools where children of the poor people could receive a music education. Music academies existed, but they were limited to wealthy families, and in such schools the education was restricted to classical European music. The opportunities for children coming from the lower classes to hear classical concerts were rare and hardly possible. Travelling in this region was not easy as it is nowadays, and this is another factor that prevented such people from attending these kinds of events.

The first music organization in the Southeast was Charleston's Saint Cecilia Society, which was founded in 1762.[1] This institution was limited to 120 people, and only men were allowed to join this group. Every member had to pay a certain amount of money every year (twenty-five pounds). That is why, it is less than likely that the lower classes could participate in the concerts organized by this institution. Other concerts, such as the ones offered by the French touring bands, were mostly oriented to the upper classes as well. Even though, it might be possible that some of these events were not only restricted to the wealthy people, but also extended to the community, especially when performed during public gatherings or folks events. Social gatherings were for the major part organized by planters, and although these, just like the other music events, were upper-classes affairs, it could be possible that

[1] For more information on Saint Cacilia society see Bill C. Malone, *Southern Music, American Music*, The University

slaves and house servants heard the music and learnt from it. Lower-classes whites were not invited to participate in this kind of events, but during special occasions "such as a wedding or a political barbecue, the social bars could come down, and the poor white neighbor or relative might be invited to partake of the festivities."(Malone 11)

Defining the origins of folk music is not an easy task, because most of the times, the authorship of songs and tunes are unknown. As most of the folkloric customs, this is an oral tradition, usually performed by nonprofessionals. Only a small part of folk musicians were actually full-time performers. Generally, we do not know who writes folk music. Nevertheless, a specific song or a definite type of music can be attributed to a certain community or to a specific geographic area. Music in the Southeast began to emerge shortly after the first Europeans and Africans arrived here. Immigrants arrived in the Southeast from many different regions: the British Isles, Northern and Central Europe, Africa and the Caribbean. From their homelands, they brought several cultural practices including their music traditions. With the passing of time, some of these traditions were lost, other changed and developed, mingling one with another, in a process of integration, known to social scientists as creolization. Folk music was leart within these communities, passing the knowledge from generation to generation.

There are many reasons why immigrants moved to this region. First of all, we have to consider that the climate in this part of the United States was not as cold as in the North. The soil was fertile enough to permit the cultivation of rice, cotton and corn. Moreover, the land was easily available and cheap, even though, most of the time, it was obtained with unfair methods. As we can read in *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*, in Georgia the land was "bought, bartered, or bullied from surrounding Indians: more than 1 million acres in the 1730s, almost 3.5 million acres in 1763, and a further cession of more than 2 million acres in 1773"[2]. The majority of the immigrants in this area came from Europe. At first, the settlers tended to organize themselves according to their provenience. Then, the smaller groups were absorbed by the bigger ones, because the bigger groups provided more safety and services, such as churches and rudimental infrastructures. The first big center in the Southeast was Charles Town, the actual Charleston, South Carolina. French and English

[2] Ben Marsh, New Georgia Encyclopedia, Colonial Immigration, 2006

immigrants who started to settle in and around the town founded it during the 1670s[3]. Charles Town was a cultural and mercantile harbor, really convenient for its position. Located on the Atlantic Coast, it was congenial for the communication and commerce with the Old World. This is why, after the first flood of German immigrants arrived in the United States, in 1733, a consistent group of them moved from Pennsylvania, where they firstly came ashore, to this region. These people are generally referred to as "Germans", because they shared the same language. But actually, they were coming from different places in Europe like: Alsace, Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, Moravia, the Palatine Region, Salzburg, Saxony, Swabia, Switzerland, Wurttemberg and Wurzburg. During the nineteenth century, German songs and music tradition spread in the Southeast. In this period, German songs would circulate through sheet music. "In the 1830s George Reed of Boston began publishing the Gems of German Song with English words in place of the German text."(Williams 80) The German songs were generally more sophisticated than the popular Anglo-American ballads. Nevertheless, when they started being introduced and slowly integrated into the southern tradition, just a few characteristics of these lieders[4] have been maintained. Despite the fact that the number of German songs began to decline considerably after the Civil War, the German music tradition surely gave its contribution to the formation of the traditional music in the Southeast. Instruments such as the dulcimer and later the autoharp are valid examples, even though they are not the only features that were included into folk music in this area by Germans. Yodeling, for instance, is a technique that was brought into the Southeast by immigrants coming from the Central Alps. It is a singing style, which alternates extended notes rapidly and in repetition. "In a yodel, a higher falsetto head voice alternates with lower notes--the chest voice--with each style of vocal production, using radically different conformation of vocal folds."(Shepherd 176) At first, this was a method of communication used in the mountain villages in the Alps. It was brought in the Appalachian Mountains, and from here it spread all over the South of the United States, also thanks to Swiss music touring groups who brought this technique around[5]. Here this tradition mingled with the African-American field hollers. The major means of popularization of the yodel was the minstrel show. According to John Shepherd: "Yodeling became widely known

[3] See W. Joseph and Martha Zierden and Julia A. King, *Another's Country*, The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa and London, 2002

[4] German composition for voice and piano

[5] Burrison, Lecture

internationally in the nineteenth century, when singing groups from Alpine Central Europe performing folkloric repertoire became popular on the stage. Minstrel shows and other theatrical performers continued yodeling on the urban stage throughout the nineteenth century, and the conventional outdoor Alpine connotation was linked with virtuosic display and a theatrical sense of bizarre."(176) During the 1920s, different musicians consolidated this style into the American folk song tradition. The most important among them is certainly Jimmie Rodgers. Jimmie Rodgers, often associated with Mississippi, was actually born in Geiger, Alabama. Probably, this could have been the place where he first heard the yodeling. This influence, already mixed with the traditional field hollers, created the American Yodeling.

The Moravians arrived in Georgia around 1735. They were not a very large group (at most, forty-one immigrants and converts, including twelve preachers and missionaries)[6]. They were protestant settlers, who had an evangelical predisposition. This is why, they eventually moved to South Carolina, where they tried to convert slaves and Indians to their religion. This area, like North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee were highly populated by Indians. Before the arrive of the Europeans, these regions were actually Cherokee lands. These tribes were then forced to move westward by the settlers who enslaved them and occupied their territory. There were a series of violent battles between natives and Europeans. After the Cherokee War, in 1763, the French settlers established a new town in South Carolina, and they called it New Bordeaux. The French community in the Southeast was quite conspicuous in number. But their cultural identity was lost shortly after the American Revolution.[7] So that, differently from what happened in the Creole's part of South Louisiana, where the typical Cajun music originated and was kept alive among the communities of French settlers[8], French music in this part of the United States disappeared almost completely. The reason why they lost their cultural identity is due to the fact that they rapidly mixed with the British settlers. The immigrants arriving from the British Isles were bigger in number. Little by little, French immigrants, seeking protection, both from the Indians and from the harsh conditions in which they found themselves, started moving into the British settlements. They

[6] For more infomation on the Moravians in Georgia see The New Georgia Encyclopedia

[7] For more information on the franch community in Georgia see W. Joseph and Martha Zierden, Julia A. King, *Another's Country*, The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa and London, 2002, pag. 27

[8] Cajun music is still sung in French.

began to adopt the English language and to attend services in British Churches. In this way, after a short period of time, their culture and traditions disappeared. English culture was stronger than the French one. This is why, in order to survive, they replaced their practices, beliefs, and materials with the ones of the English tradition.

Between 1770 and 1775, another wave of immigrants arrived in the Southeast[9]. These immigrants were Irish. Irish people started arriving in the United States during the seventeenth century, they firstly settled in the North and then moved to the South. Most of these immigrants were from Ireland's northern regions, and the majority of them were Protestants. However, some of them arrived from southern Ireland as well, where the population was Roman Catholic. American music has been strongly influenced by the presence of Irish people. Irish tunes were often a common part of the southeastern social dance music before the Civil War. There were both instrumental songs and ballads. During the 1960s, Jean Ritchie recorded many songs from the Irish tradition that were kept alive in her family, passed from generation to generation. These kinds of songs have been reevaluated during the folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s, and some of these tunes are still common nowadays. When people were not rich enough to afford a piano, these songs were often accompanied by the fiddle or by a guitar. Nevertheless, very often they were sung without the accompaniment of any instruments. The human voice was the only instrument performed. In this way, people could concentrate in the lyrics of these songs, that most of the times, were actual stories that ended with a precise moral or a lesson.[10] Many of the songs that originated in the Southeast were actually composed in the traditional Irish style. For instance, "the purely pentatonic tune of James G. Maeder's 'Ellen Asthore' (1841), is very much in the style of Celtic traditional tunes"(Williams 37), just to cite an example. The major theme of Irish songs in the Southeast was love. "We encounter Irish examples of all of the types of love songs: parting lovers; solitary figures, usually women, awaiting the return of their lovers; separated lovers who have no hope of reunion; the elegy at grave side of the beloved; the rejected lover; also the good-humored love song, sometimes making gentle fun of the over-sentimentality of the era."(Tawa 134-135) Some other songs referred to emigration, leave-taking and poverty. Nevertheless, in many of the parlor songs that Tawa took into consideration, the houses and lands left behind in the Old World are described as

[9] For more information about the Irish in the Southeast see David T. Gleeson, The Irish in the South 1815-1877, University of North Carolina Press, 2001, pag. 16

[10] Burrison, Lecture, April 10, 2012

delightful and idyllic. What Tawa suggests is that it was not poverty but ambition that set the new Americans adrift in the world. Many of the songs that originated in the United States often deal with death and murder, as well.

In the period between the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Southeast was divided between two big powers: the British and the Spanish. The colony of Georgia, which was exactly between the English area (South Carolina) and the Spanish one (Florida), was founded in 1732. After the end of the French-Indian war in 1763, the Spanish settlers withdrew from Florida and the British acquired more lands[11]. This fact led to a consistent immigration from the British Isles to this area. Scottish, Irish and German pioneers settled in the mountains and valleys of the Blue Ridge and Appalachian mountains, growing settlements in what is called the Piedmont Region, while the Spanish gradually moved away from here toward what would become New Mexico and Arizona.

One of the larger groups of immigrants was the Scottish. In his book, Dobson divides the Scots immigrants into two different categories. The people coming from the Lowlands, who immigrated in the Southeast for economic reasons, and the people from the Highlands, who got here as soldiers, to protect the southern frontier from the Spanish invasion. These immigrants settled in the Georgia border, Alabama, in various parts of Virginia and the Carolinas. Until the end of the Civil War, Scotch songs were as popular as the Irish ones.[12] Scottish folk songs started to be popular in England around 1680. After the Union of Crowns in 1603, many Scots moved to London. Here, Scottish songs started to be played and esteemed. So that when this tradition was brought into the United States, many of these songs were already familiar in the British settlements. During the eighteenth century, different collections of Scottish ballads were published such as *Orpheus Caledonius* (1725) and *The Scots Musical Museum* (1787). Immigrants in the Southeast often played the songs included in this collection. After a while, Scottish immigrants started to write their own songs, which took inspiration from the traditional ballads famous in their homeland. “Most of the ‘Scotch’ material was produced by middle-class songwrites, many of them women. Since most of these Lowland women felt that anonymity became them, much of their work was published without attribution and was often mistaken for genuine Scottish folksongs.”(Williams 79) Popular Scottish themes in songs would be poverty and emigration,

[11] See David Dobson, *Scots in Georgia and the Deep South, 1735-1845*,
[12] See Jon W. Finson, *Voices that are Gone*, *Themes in Nineteenth Century Popular Song*, Oxford University Press, 1997

but there were songs about love and bucolic life, too. According to William H. A. Williams, the reason why Americans liked these songs so much, was due to the fact that they found the simple virtues depicted in these songs, as an echo of a rural, Jeffersonian value system that was already "under siege in the decade before Lincoln's election."(81) Despite the early popularity of these songs, many did not survive after the Civil War. Despite this fact, some songs such as "Annie Laurie" did not disappear, and kept being popular throughout the twentieth century. But what is more important than this, whether the Scottish songs kept being popular or not in the United States, it is the influence they got on southeastern music. As a matter of fact, the way instruments were played[13], the themes of the ballads were what influenced the songwriting tradition in this area.

Outside the major centers such as Charleston, and Atlanta (which was called Terminus, because it was the last stop of the railroad that connected the West of the United States with the East), the Southeast remained a rural world, based on agriculture. "Paved roads were unknown, telephones didn't exist, and electricity came to many with 'rural electrification' programs of the New Deal 1930s."(Lornel 4) During this period, music was really important, because it was one of the few means of entertainment available. Southeastern music has a special value, because it originated in a land where slavery, poverty, religious fundamentalism, cultural and physical isolation, were sadly known circumstances. "Southeners turned naturally toward music because it was an integral aspect of their cultural inheritance, and because it provided a means of release and form of self-expression which required neither power, status, nor affluence. The result was the creation of a body of songs, dances, instrumental pieces, and music styles—joyous, somber, and tragic--which simultaneously entertained, enriched, and enshrined the musicians and the folk culture in which they existed, and bequeathed a legacy the whole world has come to enjoy."(Malone 3)

The musical activity was practiced at home, during neighbors gathering, and in church. Generally, a cultural region does not have fixed borders. Culture, and in this particular case music, is a fluid element that spreads throughout different states and geographical regions. The music in the Southeast is not an exception. Many of its influences derive from other part of the United States, such as Cowboy's music in the Southwest or Spanish and Caribbean

[13] See the echo of the bagpipe in the chapter dedicated to traditional instruments

music played in Spanish states such as Florida. Nevertheless, the morphology of this region, the Appalachian mountains, the Alabama river, and the Atlantic Ocean on the other side, helped keeping the features of traditional music in this region isolated, and in a way distinguishable from music in other parts of the United States. Despite this fact, traditional music in the Southeast is very diversified. This fact is due to the diversity of cultures that populated this area. Every different culture, contributed in various ways to the creation of a musical identity in this area.

As it often happens in countries dominated by colonial power, for a long time the local arts were not taken into great consideration in the United States, because they were subjected to the motherland. Musicians, just like painters and writers, followed the canon imposed in England. If they were lucky and wealthy enough, they had the possibility to go back to Great Britain and receive an education there. Moreover, there was a tendency to praise classic music and regard popular music as something of minor value, since it was often related to the lower classes, such as peasants and slaves. The change happened during the nineteenth century, when a distinctive American music identity started to take shape. “From virtually nothing in 1800, the music publishing business grew rapidly in America. By 1854, around 650 songs were being copyrighted annually in the United States.”(Williams 33) Even if the music industry asserted itself much more slowly in America than in Europe, this does not mean that music was not diffused in this area before the mid nineteenth century. African-Americans developed ring-shouts and field-songs, while among the white settlers, the most common song-format was the ballad.

The ballad has British origins, and it was brought here with the arrival of the first immigrants from the British Isles. It is characterized by the fact that it narrates a story, involving different characters. Generally, the older “Child” ballads deal with aristocracy, queens and kings, ghosts, witches and other medieval characters and topics which can be traced back to the English tradition. However, some of them have been cut and modified from their original versions, taking a life of their own. Many musicians started writing new ballads as well. During the first decades of the twentieth century, it was quite popular, among folk musicians to write new ballads, print them down in local shops, and sell them on the street for a very

cheap price. During the 1920s, Fiddlin' John Carson would do the same in the streets of downtown Atlanta[14].

Scholars believe that the first collection of ballads actually called *A Collection of Ballads*, was published in 1723[15]. This collection gained great success in the 1720s and appeared in multiple editions, but the editor sill remains anonymous. Even so, the interest generated by this book, led the English clergyman Thomas Percy to publish another collection of ballades in 1765 called *Reliques of English Poetry*[16]. This book has been regarded as a masterpiece for years. It was basically a collection of medieval English minstrel songs, which served as a reference for the study of the origin and relation of American songs and the British tradition. Percy claimed that the first edition of his book was based on an old manuscript he had rescued from a friend's maid, who was about to use it to start a fire.

The first American person to take notice and to realize the importance of folk ballads was Francis James Child, a philologist, folklorist and professor at Harvard University. He thought that ballads had lost their original value, because they were "tainted when educated classes had turned their attention to fine-art music"(Filene 12), he felt that their importance had to be restored before this tradition would disappear. Child, such as a great number of scholars interested in southern music, was from the North. He was definitely one of the most important and influential collectors of songs in the United States, but his interest was primarily related to British ballads, and he favored the lyrics of the songs rather than the melody, so that many of the tunes of the songs collected in his research have been lost. The ballads he collected are still known as *Child's Ballads*, and they have been a standard for scholars and folk enthusiasts, who referred to the songs with numbers (ex: "Young Hunting", Child ballad n. 68). Child's editing methods included "alterations" and "additions" (Kittredge 102). When he did not like a passage or when he thought it was of no importance, he would eliminate it. His main interests were beauty and purity. That is why he privileged songs that originated in England, and did not take into consideration the ballads that originated in the United States.

[14] Burrison, Lecture, 5 April 2012
[15] See Benjamin Filene, Romanticing the Folk, public memory & American Roots Music, pag 10
[16] For more details on the origins of ballads collections see See Benjamin Filene, Romanticing the Folk, public memory & American Roots Music, pag 10

The study of southern folk music began in the Appalachian mountains of North Carolina by the end of the nineteenth century. Around this time, the American Folklore Society was founded (1888) and the first collection of songs from the southern mountains was published in the *Journal of American Folklore* by Lila W. Edmonds in 1893[17]. The interest of these collectors carried on the Child tradition of studying and transcribing songs' lyrics. Like him, they would publish the texts of the songs without annotating the tunes. And most of the times, they did not take into consideration the background and the cultural environment that generated such songs. Traditional music began being fully estimated and recognized after the publication of works by the Lomaxes father and son, Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music* and the Folk Revival originated by musicians such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, during the mid 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. Despite this fact, earlier, around the turn of the twentieth century, another wave of interest on this subject was generated. This happened thanks to the mountain settlement schools, "such as the Hindman Settlement school in Knott County, Kentucky, which had been founded in 1902, the Log Cabin Settlement in Asheville, North Carolina (founded before 1895); Berea College (1869); and Pine Mountain Settlement (1913)"(Filene 16). This kind of schools was founded in order to preserve the mountain traditional culture that included music and folk songs. By early 1910, researchers such as Olive Dame Campbell travelled around Kentucky, Georgia and Tennessee, collecting tunes "as old as the hills" (Whisnant 110) from these schools.

In 1916, another folk scholar started his research in the mountains of Appalachia. His name was Cecil Sharp and he came from England. He was firstly invited in North Carolina by Olive Dame Campbell who, by that time, had already published in many editions of *The Journal of American Folklore*. As Benjamin Filene said: "Sharp's renown as a collector, though, rests not so much on his being the first to show any interest in mountain song but rather on his ability to crystallize and extend trends that had been emerging over the previous two decades."(Filene 21) His work could be seen as a continuity of what Francis James Child field research was. During the three expeditions to Appalachia he conducted between 1916 and 1918, Sharp collected about 1600 different versions of 500 ballads performed by 281 singers, and almost all this material was British-derived[18]. The important innovation that Sharp introduced in his collection is the annotation of the key and the scale of the song under the

[17] See Lila W. Edmonds, *Journal of American Folklore*, "Songs from the Mountains of North Carolina" 1899
[18] See Olive Dame Campbell and Cecil Sharp, *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, pag. 149

title of each ballad. This means that the songs in his collections were not mere literary pieces but actual songs to be performed. Sharp attempt was to reintroduce folk music in everyday life, he thought that traditional songs would help a person to "know and understand his country and his countrymen far better than he does at present, and knowing and understanding them he will love them the more, realize that he is united to them by the subtle bond of blood and kinship, and become, in the highest sense of the word, a better citizen, and a truer patriot."(Harker 116) Sharp studies on Appalachian mountaineers and their songs led him to think that their language had strong similarities with the English spoken in England a century before.[19] Sharp was not a linguist, and he tended to romanticize this area, believing that the mountain settlements in Appalachia were towns where they still talked "the language of a past day"(146), and where religion and society were still genuine and pure, because of their geographic isolation. Despite this unconvincing theory, the idea that there is a relation between old English and the English spoken in this area has been supported by other researchers in this field. Many scholars found a common pattern between these two distant areas, as if, the remoteness of the Appalachian Mountains helped to keep the language of the English immigrants almost unmodified. With regard to this topic, John Burrison, during one of his lectures at Georgia State University, pointed out the similarities between the Appalachian dialect recorded during the 1970s in the Beech Mountains of North Carolina, and the English spoken in Ulster, Northern Ireland. [20]

Sharp's ideas on purity extended to race as well. He attributed the positive connotations of these communities, such as harmony with nature and simple life, to their racial heritage. "Language, wisdom, manners, and the many graces of life that are theirs, are merely racial attributes which have been gradually handed down generation by generation."(Campbell, Sharp 92) Sharp's praise of British culture reveals, more or less openly, his racist believes. In his diary, wrote in 1918, we can read a description of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, that does not leave room for misunderstanding: "A noisy place and the air impregnated with tobacco, molasses and nigger!"(92) During his extraordinary field research, Sharp committed an error; he refused to see that one of the main characteristics of music in this region is exactly the mixture of black and white communities. Even though folk music in Appalachia

[19] See Maud Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp*, pag 145-146

[20] John Burrison, Lecture, February 9, 2012. Ray Hicks of the Beech Mountain, North Carolina. The tale performed was "Whickety-Whack Into My Sack". The similarity between the two types of English was referred to the way the word "card" was pronounced. As a matter of fact, in both these regions, this word is pronounced "kiard"

was for the major part played by white musicians, the contribution of African-Americans to it is undeniable. If, for example, we think about the use of the banjo in this region, which was imported from Africa by slaves, this relation appears evident. "While the races may have remained legally separate, legislating the strict segregation of musical ideas and instruments proved impossible."(Lornell 4) In an era dominated by the Jim Crow laws, Sharp's ideas were not something rare or surprising. What is indicative though, more than the simple acknowledgment of his point of view is that his attitude toward the black community reflects the opinion that scholars had at that time[21].

African-American music originated from the synthesis of African music, combined with the Caribbean tradition and European songs. The majority of the early slaves that arrived in this area came from the western regions of Africa. West Africa was a vast region, diversified in culture that included sophisticated city-states and social organizations. Music itself was diversified in this region. Nevertheless, all the different cultures in West Africa made use of music during ceremonies, work and general entertainment. The primary instruments were drums of different size.[22] They were played in ensembles of two or more people. These instruments were both played by hands and with sticks. Drummers were special members of the society because their presence was fundamental during rituals. Rhythm remains one of the most important African influences on folk music in the Southeast, brought here by West African slaves. One of the ways in which the European tradition of balladry mixed with the African tradition of chants and rhythm were camp meetings. Camp meetings were a form of religious service in which people would camp, attend services and listen to sermons, and pray. During these kinds of meetings, poor white people and black people would learn songs and styles from each other. The majority of these gatherings were Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist.[23] As a matter of fact, even though white and black religion practices were separated, there were certain occasions in which the two communities could participate in the same events, and this was one of those. Sometimes, black people could also sat in segregated sections of white churches. These kind of situations, but also work and plantations were the places were these two traditions mingled one with the other.

[21] See Odum, *Religious Folk-Songs of the Southern Negroes*
[22] See Chapter on Folk Instruments
[23] For more information see Bill C. Malone, *Southern Music, American Music*, The University Press of Kentucky, 1979,Lexington, pag 6

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the black population, even here in the Southeast of the United States, was living an evident cultural blooming[24], which eventually led to The Harlem Renaissance. But, during this period, the formal recognition of the importance of African-American music in the development of traditional music was often denied. Despite this fact, black music kept growing and evolving. And little by little, white audiences started showing interest in this kind of music, too. In the Southeast, this happened through the popularization of black minstrel shows, race records and black spirituals. In 1866, a white northerner named George L. White founded in Nashville, Tennessee a school for African-Americans. Nine of his students were brought on a tour in the North to perform some spiritual songs. Not only did they encounter the favor of the audience, but they also raised enough money to extend their tour to Europe and to sponsor their school.[25] In the meantime, black secular music, despite being loathed by white folk collectors, was living one of the best moments in history. One of the first collectors who started to realize the potential of this music was certainly John Lomax, but his research and recording of African-American music started later with his son Alan, during the 1930s.

Commercial recordings surely provide the best explanation to the rise of general interest on black folk music. As a matter of fact, after Okeh Records recorded "Crazy Blues" sung by Mamie Smith, other record companies started to be interested in this kind of music. In the 1920s, these types of songs started being played on different radio stations across the United States, encountering the favor of the listeners. So that recording labels such as Columbia, Paramount, Brunswick, the American Record Company, Gennett and Victor started organizing regular trips to the South to record local singers. Ralph Peer, Okeh Records music producer, labeled these kinds of records "race records". "By 1927 the companies released nearly ten race records per week. They were sold in record shops, mail-order catalogs, saloons, book stores, barber shops, drug stores, furniture stores, and cigar stands, and they quickly became important elements in African American community life."(Filene 35)

During this period, Atlanta was the capital of music of the Southeast. It was an active recording center both for black and white music. It was precisely here, that during the

[24] For example, among others: Charles W. Chesnutt from North Carolina in literature, and Blind Willie Mc Tell from Georgia in music.
[25] See Robbie Lieberman, *My Song Is My Weapon*, pag 135

summer of 1923, Ralph Peer was convinced by a local clerk of a furniture store to record a white musician called Fiddlin' John Carson. During that trip, Peer was looking for "race records", and the idea of recording an almost unknown white fiddler did not seem really appealing to him[26]. Even after the recording session, he was not convinced of his music, finding his singing awkward and unpleasing. Nevertheless, he released the record even if was not convinced. He sent five hundred copies of the record "uncatalogued, unadvertised, unlabeled and for circulation solely in Atlanta"(Malone 37-38) to the same clerk who convinced Peer to do the recordings. After a short period of time, less than two months from the recording session, all the copies had been sold. At this point, Peer understood the potential of this musician, and invited him to New York to do more recordings. In the meantime, he began other expeditions in the Southeast, looking for more white folk musicians. To refer to this particular genre of music, he eventually invented the term ""Hill Billies" that has been adopted ever after.[27] These kind of records started being a great profit for recording companies, but they were not sold throughout all the United States. Their audience remained for years mainly composed by "southeastern working class whites."(Cohen 53) Also the songs recorded came for the major part from this part of the United States, as Peer himself stated in an interview given in 1927 in Bristol Tennessee, when he was working for RCA Victor: "In no section of the South have the pre-war melodies and old mountaineer songs been better preserved than in the mountains of East Tennessee and Southern Virginia… and it was primarily for this reason that Victor chose Bristol as its opening base."(Wolfe 10) Precisely Virginia is the place where Peer discovered The Carter Family, that eventually became one of the most known and appreciated folk bands of all times.

This was the period in which, for the first time, the interest of the collectors started to leave behind the "British canon", imposed by Francis J. Child and Cecil Sharp. There was a growth of interest not only in folk songs that originated in the British Isles, but also in the ones that were composed originally in the United States, which included songs written and performed by African-Americans. Even though black and white musicians kept influencing one-another, the division between the two genres was kept well separated. During the recordings made in

[26] Fiddlin' John Carson at that time was known in the Atlanta area, thank to the Atlanta Fiddlin' Convention and to WSB radio where his songs were often played. But in the rest of the United States or even in other part of the South he was unknown.

[27] See Benjamin Filene, *Romanticing the Folk*, public memory & American Roots Music, pag.35

Atlanta during the 1920s, black and white artists would perform in the same location. But once their record was released, it would end in a different category: hillybilly or race records. The producers would also use a different system of numeration; they would advertise the two genres separately and sell them in different markets.

The departure from Child and Sharp's approach to folk song and ballads was definitely generated by record companies. If on the one hand, Child and Sharp's attempt was to document songs, in order to preserve what otherwise would have been lost; on the other hand, the interest of the record companies was merely economic. They were not interested in publishing books of texts, but to record something that would have been easily sold and appreciated by the masses. Nevertheless, the tradition of collecting songs and ballads did not die out. People such as Carl Sandburg and R. W. Gordon kept on the tradition transcribing and publishing folk songs, but at this time something had changed. As a matter of fact, their interest did not rely exclusively on British ballads, they would take into consideration new songs and folk music performed by black musicians as well.

An important feature, both for black and white communities, was dance. Dancing gatherings were important social events among rural southerners. These dances were performed in different places: taverns and dance halls, but also in private farms and habitations. "After a family sent out the word that a dance was scheduled for a particular evening, farm folk came by horse and wagon from all over the countryside and gathered in a room that had been stripped bare of furniture. In some cases, two rooms were prepared for the dancers, and a fiddler sat or stood in the doorway between the two rooms. Quite often he had no accompanist; occasionally, though, he teamed with a musician playing a parlor organ, French harp[28], banjo or guitar. As late as the twenties, in some parts of the Appalachian South a fiddle and banjo were considered a band."(Malone 9) This type of dance gathering described above, was clearly for white people. Nevertheless, the African-American community in the Southeast has an interesting dancing tradition as well. Juba dances, tap dances and cakewalk are some example. Syncopated rhythm is the main characteristic of these kinds of dances. Another African-American dance which originated in this part of the United States is the Charleston. It is a later dance, popular during the 1920s, and it was named after the city in South Carolina where it originated. Most of these dances may have originated as a

[28] Harmonica

burlesque of the formal plantation dances held by white wealthy people, and witnessed by the slaves, even though the masters may not always have recognized it.

Traditional Folk Instruments: Music Before Music Stores

The tradition of crafting folk instruments in the Southeast developed and changed over the years. Even though we do not possess many records referring to music during the Colonial period, we know that it originated from the encounter of the different types of cultures present in this area, and it was based on the availability of materials the land could offer. Many times, the choice of instruments is associated with a specific regional or ethnic background or with family traditions. When I first started this research, and I was looking for material on the origin of musical instruments in the Southeast, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the majority of the instruments originated exactly in this part of the United States. The reason why this happened is not completely clear, even if, a possible explanation could be the different approach to religion between the North and the South. As it is stated in the *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, "In the North there was a tendency to treat the art as 'worldly' and hence objectionable, so that even church singing became curiously degenerate because it was unsupported by general knowledge. In the south there was probably more freedom of thought and practice."(22) This could be one of the reasons why the South is so important in terms of music folklore and traditions.

There are many different kinds of instruments that started to be popular in the twentieth century. They can be string instruments, wind instruments and percussions instruments. Most of the times, especially during the Reconstruction era, when people could not afford to buy instruments, and music shops were not common yet, the easiest way to play music was to create your own artifact. The models would be the traditional European instruments such as guitars and violins combined with the African tradition of string instruments and percussions. The materials that were mostly used were wood, metal and stoneware. Everyday tools such as jugs, wire, broom bristles and cigar boxes were often used as well. For example, instruments such as guitars made with cigar boxes are preserved and, can still be seen at the Atlanta History Museum (Atlanta GA).

String instruments

String instruments play a major role in the traditional music of the Southeast. The ones here taken into consideration are the most important and common examples. These kinds of instruments were both played as solo instruments and in ensembles. The so-called "string bands", bands entirely composed of sting instrumentation, were popular in this part of the United States from the turn of the twentieth century.

Fiddle

"Fiddle" is the name given to the violin in the United States. The difference between a common violin and a fiddle is not really clear and has often been debated by experts and scholars. Generally, the term "fiddle" is used in reference to folk and traditional American music, even though we can find this term associated with folk music from other parts of the world, especially Great Britain.

The origin of the American fiddle is certainly European. More specifically English, Irish and Scottish. Many years of research have been spent on this topic, and from this it emerged that many fiddle's tunes were actually carried from the Old World to the United States where they have been kept alive, even if sometimes they were modified a little from the original version. This happened especially in relation to the *bagpipe*. As a matter of fact, a great number of songs written or created for the bagpipe in the UK, where surprisingly discovered in the United States, readapted for the fiddle. Comparing these tunes is startling, because even though their origin is still traceable, over the years, they started losing their original connotation, taking on a life of their own. This fact is due especially to the way the fiddle is played in this land. There is a specific manner of playing this instrument here, which is particular from this place and nowhere else.

As professor Burrison stated in one of his lessons I attended at Georgia State University, the American way of playing the fiddle is peculiar in many ways. First of all, what renders it so unique is the encounter of the European violin tradition with the syncopated rhythm typical of the African American communities. Another important characteristic is "the double stopping" and "the triple stopping" which could be another echo of the bagpipe, transposed to the fiddle in Ireland and Scotland[29]. These elements just mentioned are musical

[29] John A. Burrison, Lecture 3/05/2012

techniques, that consist in noting respectively two or three strings at a time. This style expedient create a suggestive effect that is typical of the Appalachian area and of the Southeast in general.[30] Moreover, when the fiddle is backed by other instruments like a banjo or guitar, it is often held on the arm against the chest rather than under the chin. This is a way for the fiddle player to listen to the other musicians and not to lose track of the rhythm.

One of the most important fiddle players in the South was Fiddlin' John Carson, a musician from Fannin Country, Georgia. He started playing the fiddle at a young age, on his father's farm. His instrument was a Stradivari copy[31] brought from Ireland in the early eighteenth century[32]. Around 1900 he married and moved to Atlanta. By the beginning of the 1920s Atlanta was becoming an important city for the fiddle. The importance is based on the popularity of the Old Fiddlers' Convention, which was firstly established in 1913 . As a matter of fact, as we can read in the second number of the *Atlanta Historical Bulletin*: "Fiddling contests had been a feature of country fairs since the 1870s, but Atlanta became the site of the state (and later regional) champion-ship competition, the state's country music as well as political capital."(63)

The Guitar and the Mandolin

As everybody knows, the guitar is not an American invention. Nevertheless, its importance in American music is extraordinary. The tradition of guitar-making was common both among the African-American communities as well as the white communities, who carried the rudimentary knowledge of how to fabricate a guitar from the Old World. The first guitars brought into the United States were the Spanish guitars. They arrived here in the mid 1500s, specifically in St. Augustine, Florida, carried by the early Spanish settlers.[33] Little is known about the history of the American guitar before the nineteenth century. For many years, scholars had the tendency to neglect the early period of American music, suggesting that between the arrive of the first settlers and the nineteenth century, music was somewhat overlooked or neglected. For example, the chapter dedicated to the Colonial Period in the *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* states: "It seems that at first none of the colonists

[30] See for example *The Georgia Pot Lickers*
[31] Italian violins were often used as models to create new examples
[32] See Daniel Wayne W, Pickin' on Peachtree: *A History of Country Music in Atlanta, Georgia*
[33] See David K. Bradford, *The Early History of Guitar in America*

possessed any special taste or aptitude in the music field."(22) But this is far from reality. As a matter of fact, the tradition of playing guitar in America survived and got bigger thanks to the settlers and to the Africans who moved in the South , and gather together passing the knowledge of old European chants and ballads from generation to generation. Clearly, one of the central instruments in this "ritual" was the guitar.

The Spanish settlers are supposedly not the only ones who brought the guitar to the Southeast. The strong presence of French and British settlers around Charleston, South Carolina (at that time it was called Charles Town) suggests that among these colonies the use of guitar must have been present. To support this thesis, David K. Bradford underlines the importance of this instrument among these communities, making reference precisely to "the French guitar" and to the "British guitar", which were not just two different types of guitars, they also implied a different way of playing the instrument.

Another interesting factor in the history of the guitar in the Southeast is the impact of mail-order. As a matter of fact, when mail-order became accessible, even within the most remote agrarian communities, the use of the guitar increased considerably. "For many years during the early stages of the development of the mail-order business [the mail-order houses] were permitted to ship their catalogs and other advertising matter as second-class at a very low second-class mail rates."(Nystrom 195) And this encompassed the buying of guitars in a massive way. Bruce Bastin in his *Red River Blues* gives us some data referred to this turning out of guitar sales: "Guitars may have been offered in 1894, in view of the 22½ pages given over to musical instruments other than organs and pianos. […] Over a thousand 'samples of guitar' were offered. By 1905 there were six pages announcing guitars, including a full-page advertisement of the $2.95 model and a whole range from $4.95 to $21.00." (18)

Another way of buying and selling instruments, which was common during the first decade of the twentieth century was the "door to door" system. As a matter of fact, before the introduction of music shops, sellers would drive from town to town, selling their instruments directly at people's houses. This is one of the ways guitar was sold, and one of the reasons why it got so popular precisely during this period of time.[34]

[34] Burrison, Lecture 3/07/2012

Another instrument which became popular thanks to this kind of selling method is the mandolin. This instrument, invented in Italy in the seventeenth century, was brought to the United states by Italian immigrants in the late eighteenth century. “For over 100 years it was used almost exclusively within the Italian community. The mandolin’s popularity increased during the 1880s because of touring European string ensembles that featured it. By the turn of the century it was not unusual to find mandolin orchestras or societies in small towns and colleges across America.”(Lornell 27) During this period, the mandolin started to be used more commonly in the South East, as a member of string bands.

The Appalachian Dulcimer

The dulcimer is one of the most important elements in the American Folk tradition. It is a diatonic string instrument, generally two or three feet long, which was created around the year 1800 in the United States. It generally has three or four strings and it is played laying it flat on the musician’s lap. No instrument quite like this exist in Europe, nevertheless, as Ralph Lee Smith states in his book *Appalachian Dulcimer Tradition,* “research in recent years has established that the Dulcimer is the American member of northern European folk zithers.”(36) Its predecessor can be found in Germany, England, Sweden, Norway, and France. There are many different explanations about the origin of this instrument. The most conceivable is that the German scheitholt, which is a particular type of zither, was brought to Pennsylvania by German immigrants, who then moved to Virginia and began to fabricate it here. Over the years, it evolved its original shape and sound, becoming what we know now as the Appalachian Dulcimer. This instrument is also called Mountain Dulcimer to distinguish it from another instrument called Hammered Dulcimer, which has some similarities with the Appalachian kind, but is played and sounds in a different way ; more specifically it is hammered and it is chromatic .

The Appalachian Dulcimer, just like the majority of the instruments played in the Folk tradition, shaped according to the availability of material the land and the small settlements where it developed could offer. It is called “Appalachian” because it firstly spread in the mountains of Virginia. Other types of similar instruments derived from the dulcimer developed in this area.

The dulcimer is an instrument that was often played by women. It was considered a domestic instrument, frequently played during family gatherings. As Smith tells us, “few

traditional dulcimer players could read music"(37), they played by ear, and since it was rarely accompanied by other instruments but voice, not too much attention was given to the tuning of it.

Banjo

This instrument, frequently associated with white Country music, actually originated in West Africa. It was brought here by African slaves as early as seventeenth century. The African-American community fabricated and played the banjo for years, before its usage became popular during white minstrel shows and the black population started distancing itself from it. The reason why this happened is not exactly clear. One possible explanation could be the fact that during minstrel shows white people made fun of the black communities in many unpleasant ways, and the banjo was a central instrument during these kind of performances. African-Americans probably quit playing the instrument because they associated it with the racial problem and segregation.

One of the first appearances of the banjo in the Southeast dates back to 1787 in North Carolina, when a man in Tarboro saw "a dance of Negroes to the banjo in his yard."(Attmore 43) Even though this instrument was mostly played by white people in this area after the nineteenth century, Cecilia Conway and Bruce Bastin testify to the continuity of "elderly black banjo players in the North Carolina Piedmont"(III) where African music mingled with the European one.

The archetypes of the banjo played in Africa and brought into the United States had different names: molo, halam, bania, bandores or banzas. The name banjo probably derives from the last one. The number of strings in early banjos varied from three to eight strings according to the place, where it was manufactured. The invention of the five-string banjo is often associated with a myth that Cecilia Conway tells in the preface of her book: "The story goes that once upon a time, long ago, a white minstrel invented the five string banjo. But actually the man in the myth was not primarily a minstrel but a southerner. Further investigation allows us to supply a context for this event-Joel Sweeney was a Virginia banjo player who later become a minstrel, and his invention appeared before 1840."(47) Whether this story is true or not is of little importance if we think that it surely has helped in the development and popularity of this instrument across the country.

There are several different ways of playing the banjo, but it is generally played with the stroke of the thumb, the index or the middle finger. Once it was made with wood and animal skin, but nowadays, mass produced banjos are generally made of wood, metal and steel strings.

Wind Instruments

These type of instruments mostly originated by the encounter of the European flute tradition combined with the African one. Once more, before the introduction of mass-produced instrumentation, such as the "harp" (harmonica), the creation of these gears was directly related to the environment and the availability of raw materials.

Jugs

Playing Jugs as a rhythm instrument, was a common thing in the first decades of the twentieth Century. This tradition developed most of all among the African-American communities, where many of the so called "jug bands" were formed. The jug used in folk music is a pot made of stoneware, it could vary in dimension but it is generally quite big, generally one to two gallons of capacity. The musician blows into a hole to generate the sound, controlling it with the movement of one hand and the tensions of the lips. The most important and known jug band came from Memphis (The Memphis Jug Band). But this instrument was widely used in the Southeast as well, especially in Georgia. For example, the guitarist Tampa Red, who was originally from Albany, used to play with a Jug Band during the 1920s, it was called Hokum Jug Band. Another artist from Georgia, who would sing accompanied by this kind of instruments was Ma Rainy, who was born in Columbus. She started to be popular in this city singing during black minstrel shows. During this kind of shows and during medicine shows too, a part of the entertainment was dedicated to music, and jugs were employed in the performance of folk songs and burlesque.

One of the reasons why playing the Jug was a common thing in the South-East of the United States is because this area has a long tradition of pottery-making. As we can read in *Roots of a Region*, this is a feature that we can trace back to the German and British tradition, brought to America by immigrants during the seventeenth and eighteenth Century. The European pottery-making is not the only ancestor of this art in this part of the country. As a

matter of fact, the making of clay-pottery in Africa surely influenced this kind of folkway. Not by chance some early potters in the South were African-Americans.

Kazoo

The kazoo is an American invention. More precisely, it was firstly created during the 1840s in Macon, Georgia by an African-American named Alabama Vest. It was then produced by a German-American clockmaker and presented at the Georgia State Fair in 1852, before being sold to a toy producer.

This instrument is a wind instrument which belongs to the membranophone category. It is generally made of metal, even though, more recent and cheaper versions are made of plastic. Its shape it is often compared with the one of a submarine (one of its first names was "Down South Submarine"(Parp 11)). It is essentially a cylindrical open-ended tube with a membrane in the center of it. Playing this instrument is not very complicated: the sound is not created by blowing, such as in the most common wind instruments, it is vocally produced by humming, speaking or singing into it. Doing so, the inner membrane is put in motion; it vibrates and creates the sound.

Even though the kazoo was first created in the United States, its roots can be traced back to Africa. As a matter of fact, as Barbara Stewart tells us in her book *How to Kazoo*, some similar instruments were found in a number of cultures throughout this continent. The African relatives of the kazoo are called mirlitones. They were not exactly musical instruments; their main purpose was to imitate the sound of animals and they were also used as weapons of intimidation. Mirlitons were also employed in sacred ceremonies, but the purpose of the instrument in this context still remains unknown. What is certain, is that Alabama Vest, when constructing his first example of kazoo, had clearly in mind its African antecedent.

The kazoo quickly spread in the South-East because its price was affordable and because it was an easily available instrument. As Barbara Stewart states: "The kazoo took an important role as a musical instrument in early Blues and Country music in the United States. From the 1840s on, musicians used the kazoo to amplify their voices, making them loud enough to be heard over banjos and other instruments."(17) It was popular also during community gatherings, minstrel shows and comedies.

Quills

Another traditional instrument brought from Africa to the South of the United Sates are the quills. This blowpipe or panpipe, is an ancient instrument, which has been found in a number of different communities all around the world, from Africa to China. The oldest example is traced back to the Ancient Greeks; the name "panpipe" surely derives from the Greek word "Pan" which means "everything" and was also the name of a god (among many other things, he was the god of rustic music). Despite this fact, the term "quills" refers only to the African-American version of this instrument. It consists of four to eight cane tubes tied together and disposed according to their length (from the longest to the shortest). These canes are closed at one end. The player blows across the tubes' holes to create the sound. The peculiarity of the African way to play this instrument, which was brought and survived in the United States, is the alternation between blowing and whooping or singing.

Its chromatic trait creates a distinct sound which is characterized by the so called "blue notes". This feature and the way this instrument is played has a direct link with the introduction of the **harmonica** in the Southeast, or more generally into the South of the United States. As a matter of fact, even though the harmonica is a German invention, when it was imported here, the African-American people who adopted this instrument applied their knowledge of quills to this new instrument, creating a specific sound, which is one of the most important characteristics of the Blues.

Percussions Instruments

Before the European drum-set started to be common in the United States, there were other ways to keep rhythm and accompany vocals and other instruments. Most of the times, these tools were created with everyday objects such as cowbells, pans and woodblocks. One example made of wood is the **stomp-box**. This instrument is really simple to create. It consists of a wooden box that the musician generally plays with his/her feet (this is why it is called this way). The reason why it became so popular, and it is still used nowadays, it is because it allows the musician to play other instruments, such as guitar, and have a simple but effective rhythmic accompaniment.

Percussions instruments in the South-East were mostly associated with the African-American community. The drum tradition in Africa is very ancient. Gerolamo Merolla, who was a

Capuchin missionary in Congo (central Africa) during the 1680s, wrote that drums were "commonly made use of at unlawful Feasts and Merry-makings, and [were] beaten upon with the Hands, which nevertheless makes a noise to be heard at a great distance."(651) The plantation owners were aware of this African tradition. That is why, between 1730 and 1790, a series of laws against the use of the drums passed in a number of Southern states including Georgia and South Carolina, fearing that this could work as a code to exchange information, to plan a possible escape or, worse than that, a revolt against planters. "The early accommodation to Africans' drumming in South Carolina was an uneasy tolerance, though. The planters feared it. In 1730, according to a Charleston planter, a group of slaves "conspired to Rise and destroy us" at a dance which featured drumming. The alleged revolt was found out and quelled before the slaves were able issue a call to arms, however." Even though the drums were banned from plantations for fear that slaves could "talk drums", percussion did not disappear. After these laws were passed, African-Americans invented another way to keep rhythm, which was called "Hambo", where tapping and clapping, the body itself was used as a drum. One of the main features of Folk music in this part of the United States is exactly the influence of African syncopated rhythm. The tradition of "march" rhythm and bands brought from Europe in northern states such as New England, did not reach and affect this region[35].

Washboard

The washboard became part of the African-American tradition of Folk instruments in the late nineteenth century. Largely used by blues musicians during the pre-war period, it takes its name from the board used to wash clothes. The reason why it got so popular is probably due to the fact that it was a very common tool and so really easy to get. The first examples of washboards employed in music were actual washing tools turned into percussion instruments. This instrument is unique to the United States; nevertheless, the fact that it originated among the African-American communities makes us think about the relation it has with the African percussion tradition. The original washboard was entirely made of wood; the musician would tap its surface to create the sound and accompany other instruments such as banjo, guitar and voice. The modern washboard made of metal started being fabricated at the beginning of last century. The ridges on its surface are generally played with thimbles (little metal objects adjusted on fingers). The screeching of the

[35] Burrison, lecture 3/11/2012

washboard, create a very particular sound. But the important feature of this instrument is not only the sound itself but the rhythm created. As a matter of fact, the syncopated tunes played by the black workers in Georgia were often accompanied by it. "Some washboard players also attach cowbells, shakers, tambourines, or woodblocks to their instrument to add tonal variation to their repertoire."(Lornell 30)

The Origins of Folk Music in the Southeast between Sacred and Profane

To understand the origins of traditional music in the Southeast, we have to consider the different genres from which this music originated. In music, just like in other art forms, classify and divide different styles is often difficult and sometimes misleading. The process of creating music, especially the folk type, is something that originates from different sources mixed together, and most of the times, the people who create such music are not totally aware of what they are doing. If we take for example the musicians from Appalachia of the late nineteenth century, they had no idea that their music would have been later classified as folk, and probably they did not even know that what they were doing would have become history and a matter of study. Establishing borders is also another problem. Why do we have to define a song and choose whether it is a blues or a country song if it fits in both categories? The answer is that, in order to understand and appreciate the historical and cultural value of a certain song, we have to keep in mind the different musical genres to which this may be associated with. Nevertheless, we have also to be ready to part from them, making use of more general terms that encompass different styles, which give us the possibility to get rid of pointless technicalities. Harry Smith, in his Anthology[36], divides the songs collected into three different categories: ballads, social music and songs. At a first sight his classification could result a little bit odd. As a matter of fact, he did not chose to divide his Anthology into already consolidated genres such as spirituals or work songs, he makes up a personal division, that in the end results more effective. The reason why it is so effective is because in this way, we do not have any racial barriers, we can approach a song without bias or already established ideas. The most impressive thing is that he released his Anthology during the 1950s, in a period in which racial discrimination was still an ordinary thing. I like to think that music helped the obliteration of such barriers, before the actual civil

[36] The Anthology of American Folk music is a collection of folk songs released in 1952 by Folkways Records

right movements were created. That said, a little bit of history of the different genres of music and art form which influenced and characterized folk music may result helpful.

Minstrel and Medicine Shows

Minstrel Shows are an American theatrical form, very popular during the nineteenth century. It began during the 1820s and it lasted until the first decades of the twentieth century, when it was replaced by Vaudeville.[37] The first recognized minstrel band was composed by four different instrumentalists. They made their first appearance in New York during the 1840s. A couple of months after their debut, one of their playbill reported: "Songs, refrains, and ditties as sung by the southern slaves at all their merry meetings such as the gatherings in of the cotton and sugar crops, corn husking, slave weddings, and junketings."[38] This form of entertainment was very popular in the Southeast. People would gather together to see this kind of performance, which involved acting, singing and dancing. Blackface entertainment was used during Minstrel shows. It consisted of white comedians, who would paint their face black with coal or burnt cork, to resemble black slaves. The vogue for blackface started before the popularity of minstrel shows, but it got really popular only in the 1830s[39]. This kind of burlesque, most of the time stereotyped black people, portraying the African-American community as lazy, superstitious and funny. It was strongly opposed by abolitionists, like Mark Twain, who saw in this kind of performances a way to idealize the plantation system and slavery. This is one of the reasons why it declined in the twentieth century, replaced by other forms of entertainment.

Even though, the sketches and the satire of Minstrel Shows is questionable in terms of presentation of the African-American community, the importance this performance had in the creation of an entertainment distinctly American is not disputable. As a matter of fact, minstrel show can be considered one of the ancestors of folk music and American theater. Minstrel show originated from different traditions, such as Shivaree, Irish and African dances, European and American music. Shivaree is an Irish ritual, brought into the Southeast from Irish immigrants. It is a sort of carnivalesque, in which male peasants would dress in traditional costumes and roam the streets, banging pots and pans, blowing horns and singing

[37] See Frank W. Sweet, A History of the Minstrel Show, Backintyme, pag. 1

[38] Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1962, pag 120. See playbills 20, 21 and 22 of Brinley Hall, as cited by the author.

[39] See Bill C. Malone, *Southern Music, American Music*, The University Press of Kentucky, 1979,Lexington, pag 19

traditional songs. It could be associated to the Halloween tradition of trick or treating. These "actors" would in fact, move from house to house, performing their show. Generally, this show involved the same characters: the king, the evil one, the doctor, the hero, and other roles.[40] Many times, they would also dress up like women, to stress the irony of the moment.

The dances performed during minstrel shows have West African origins. Black people did not take part to minstrel shows until the turn of the twentieth century with very few exceptions. Nevertheless, white performers looked at the black plantation dancers as a source of inspiration. Other influences coming from West Africa were: the use of the banjo and rhythm instruments, such as the tambourine and bones, which were probably already used by black slaves at that time, and the use of African-American dialect. All these African-American derivations were acquired not by any written documents, but by oral tradition and observation of the black community, through a folk process. As Cecila Conway states in her book, this process defined two phases of the history of minstrel show: "The Celtic-American transmission of fiddle tunes and songs, and the acquisition of materials specifically from Blacks."(87) The oral tradition started to be a matter of conflict after the introduction of copyrights. The tunes sung during minstrels shows had different variants, according to the place where they came from and the people who sung them. After the introduction of copyrights, cases in which people wanted to get credit for the same song were quite popular. For example, in the 1830s, three different performers claimed the authorship of a minstrel song called "Zip Coon". Each of their variant came from a traditional fiddle tune called "Natchez". (Wittke 16)

The early minstrels were song and dance performers who moved from place to place, traveling throughout the United States. During the 1820s, the minstrels started to "sing songs on horseback in the circus rings and between the acts of dramatic farces or tragedies, in tents and theatres from New Orleans to New York."(16) The bond between this kind of performance and the South is really strong. The popularity of minstrel shows in this part of the country is probably due to the setting and the topics explored in minstrelsy. The majority of the audience would certainly find the stories and the situation portrayed familiar, identifying themselves in it.

[40] See Frank W. Sweet, *A History of the Minstrel Show*, Backintyme, pag. 4

The creator of the sadly popular "Jim Crow" character was Thomas D. "Daddy" Rice. Jim Crow was a famous character in minstrel show, highly stereotypical and exaggerated. Rice may not have thought about the consequences of the creation of his character. As a matter of fact, nowadays, the popularity of Jim Crow in the South is directly linked with the segregation laws passed in the South in 1876, which remained effective till 1965 and took their name after this character.

An important African-American contribution to minstrel shows came from the dancer and singer famous with the nickname of "Master Juba". William Henry Lane (1825-1853) was one of the first and few black men to perform in minstrel shows before 1858.[41] His dancing and singing skills were so appreciated that he was eventually able to advance his career and go performing in Great Britain, where he was noticed by Charles Dickens who wrote: "The fiddle grins, and goes at it tooth and nail; there is new energy in the tambourine; new laughter in the dancers; new smiles in the landlady; new confidence in the landlord; new brightness in the very candles. Single shuffle, double shuffle, cut and cross-cut; snapping his fingers, rolling his eyes, turning in his knees, presenting the backs of his legs in front, spinning about on his toes and heels like nothing but the man's fingers on the tambourine; dancing with the two left legs, two right legs, two wooden legs, two wire legs, two spring legs […] he finishes by leaping gloriously on the bar-counter, and calling for something to drink, with the chuckle of a million of counterfeit Jim Crows, in one inimitable sound!"(238-239)

Daniel Emmett, another popular minstrel man, composed the song "Dixie", which eventually became a sort of hymn of the South. Minstrel men, who were very appreciated in the Southeast, where people developed a sensibility for the racial issue much later than the people from the North. Minstrel show did not have an exclusively negative connotation though. This kind of entertainment, helped in the creation and development of music genres such as the blues and Appalachian folk music. It is also important because this type of show is one of the first forms of American entertainment, which laid the basis for a kind of entertainment typically American, finally free from the British legacy.

[41] See Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1962, pag 27

Medicine shows were very similar to minstrel shows. They were a form of entertainment that could be considered an ancestor of the circus. Medicine shows travelled throughout the United States on horses and wagons, reaching remote towns and villages. Even though, the place where they were more popular was the Southwest, attending a medicine show in the Southeast was not an uncommon thing. They were characterized by a variety of different performances such as minstrelsy, vaudeville and burlesque. The performers would build a wooden stage in the center of the town where they stopped. Here they would sell magical remedies, such as Snake Oil and Kickapoo Indian Remedy. The characters they presented were often related to regional stereotypes and theatrical fictional characters, such as the Noble Savage. A typical medicine show could last for hours and it was generally divided into different parts. Most of the times, the first part was introduced by a banjo player[42]. During medicine shows, just like during minstrel shows, music was an essential element in the course of the performance.

Sacred music

Sacred music was one of the first forms of music practiced in the United States. European settlers brought into the Southeast the chants and hymns they learnt in the Old World, which eventually changed and evolved during the years. The European Christian music tradition gave rise to other forms of sacred music in the United States, that can be generally divided into two large groups: white spirituals and black spirituals. Sacred music in the Southeast is mostly associated with Protestantism. In this part of the country, religious music developed as a consequence of the so-called "Second Great Awakening", an evangelical movement that started in Kentucky and reached Georgia and the Carolinas in the nineteenth century.[43] In this period, preachers would go from village to village, preaching their sermons, trying to evangelize European immigrants, African-Americans and Indians. Another ideology that arose in the rural environment had his roots in New England. "One body of church music was developed to suit the needs of urban congregations; a different body of music was created for rural folk. The principal spokesman for the former was a transplanted New

[42] See Chase Bringardner, Performing Arts Resources, Theatre Library Association, New York, 2011, p.186-192
[43] See Ron Byrnside, Antebellum Music, New Georgia Encylopedia, 2006

Englander, Lowell Mason, a champion of the so-called better music movement. Jesse Mercer and the compilers of the Sacred Harp were leaders of the rural type."[44]

White Spirituals

The term white spirituals was firstly introduced by George Pullen Jackson in his book *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*.[45] This term is commonly used to refer to the white sacred music tradition, which originated in the United States during the nineteenth century. Sacred music in the Southeast, spread rapidly after the arrival of the first settlers from Europe. Nevertheless, this kind of music was performed according to the European standard and did not have a specific American connotation. According to Jackson, the first distinctive American sacred music firstly originated in New England, and was eventually brought into the Southeast, by music scholars and immigrants coming from the northern regions. This kind of music is strongly related to Protestantism. In the beginning, sacred singing was not associated to any particular group of people. The aim of religious music gatherings was to involve more people as possible, who most of the times were non-professionals. Group singing was very important, most of the time it was more important than the good result of the performance itself. This is why the text of these songs had to be very simple and repetitive, so that people could be memorized it easily during the sacred singing meetings. In regard to this subject, Luis Benson, an historian of sacred music, gives us an idea of how this kind of music developed in the Southeast: "The preachers were itinerant, the meetings as often as not in cabins or in the fields, and the singing largely without books, other than the one in the preacher's hand. The tunes [had to be] very familiar or very contagious, the words given out one or two lines at a time if not already known. Under these conditions the development of… a rude type of popular song, indifferent to anything in the way of authorized by hymnody, seems to have been inevitable."(Benson 215)

The camp meetings of the early nineteenth century played a major role in the development of the white spiritual tradition.[46] Camp meetings have a southeastern connotation. The first one was held in Kentucky and then it spread in Tennessee and the Carolinas. During these kind of religious meetings, black and white people would gather together in remote areas,

[44] See Ron Byrnside, Antebellum Music, New Georgia Encylopedia, 2006
[45] See George Pullen Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1933,
[46] See John A. Burrison, *Roots of a Region*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 2007, page 81

praying and singing together, under the guide of one of more preachers, who would deliver sermons. A camp meeting could last for weeks.[47] Redemption was the central theme of these meetings. Preachers would preach about sinners and salvation. The atmosphere of camp meeting should have been really peculiar. An observer reported: "At no time was the floor less than half-covered. Some lay quiet, unable to move or speak. Some talked but could not move. Some beat the floor with their heels. Some, shrieking in agony, bounded like fish out of water. Many lay down for hours at a time. Others rushed widely about over the stumps and benches, then plunged, shouting Lost! Lost! Into the forest."(Hill 62). These were the kind of situations in which American sacred music originated, in a mix of shouts, prayers and singing ecstasy.

The first southeastern sacred singing activity seems to have its origins in northwestern Virginia. Ananis Davisson, a singing-school master of Virginia, was the author of the first religious songbook in this area, which is called *Kentucky Harmony*. This book is a collection of 144 religious tunes. Every tunes reports indications on how the songs should be sang, indicating the key and the harmony (bass, tenor, counter and treble).[48]

Another important contribution in the shaping of southeastern religious music was given by the German communities present in this area. Jackson states that as early as 1775, more than fifteen per cent of the white population in South Carolina and in Georgia, as well as in Appalachia, was composed by German immigrants[49]. The German population that migrated from Pennsylvania to the Southeast was a profoundly religious group. The book used by these communities was called *Choral-Music*, and was firstly published in 1816. As Jackson states in his book: "[*Choral-Music*] was not a highly significant book, as such. But Joseph Funk, the man who made it, and the influences which he and his descendants have exerted in the field of music in the South for more than a hundred subsequent years have made his first book important far beyond its intrinsic worth."(31) The hymns they sang were mostly in German. This is one of the reasons that led their tradition to extinction. As a matter of fact, they rapidly associated with other groups coming from England, Scotland and Ireland. And

[47] See Samuel S. Hill, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks*, Mercer University Press, Durham, 1983, pag 62

[48] For more information on choral singing in the South see George Pullen Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1933 pag 27-28

[49] See George Pullen Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1933 pag 158

little by little, the German language became something strange to the new environment, something obsolete and not easily understandable by the new generations. This does not mean that these communities stop singing, they just evolved into another tradition.

Normally, white spirituals were sung without the accompaniment of any other instruments, a part, in some cases by a piano or an organ. Folk instruments, such as the fiddle, were generally considered secular instruments, and strongly opposed by religious people. Nevertheless, some Celtic dance tunes were adapted to spiritual texts in the Appalachia region. Such tunes have their origins in Ireland and Scotland, where they were firstly played with the bagpipe. Among fasola[50] circles, it was common to take secular songs, mostly coming from the ballad tradition, and transmute them into religious songs. So, if on the one hand, secular music, kept being considered as something "devilish", on the other hand, part of it was included in the sacred tradition.

The Sacred Harp: A living tradition

The most important tradition in the history of white sacred music in the Southeast is *The Sacred Harp.* The Sacred Harp is a book of spiritual hymns and strophic psalms, printed in music notation using four shape notes (Fa Sol La Mi). *The Sacred Harp* is not just a book, it is still a living tradition, and also a moment of communal gathering, where people sing together, pray and share food.

The Sacred Harp is distinguished from other hymnbooks because of some peculiar characteristics. First of all, the songs are created for multi-stanza poetry, where the main tune is repeated in the following stanzas. This refrain is called "choruses". The songs are generally introduced by nonstrophic set pieces called "odes". Sometimes these anthems are taken from the Bible and can vary in length, texture and key. Every song reports its melody through the use of the four shaping notes. The members of the Sacred Harp intonate these notes before every song they sing.

The first Sacred Harp songbook was written in 1844 by Benjamin Franklin White and his young collaborator Elisha J. King in Georgia[51]. Both of them were singers and composers.

[50] Fasola is a term that refers to the tradition of shapenote singing (Fa Sol La) that originated in the Southeast in the first half of the nineteenth century.
[51] See David Warren Steel and Richard H. Hulan, *The Makers of the Sacred Harp*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield, 2010, page 3

Despite this fact, their job in the publication of the first Sacred Harp, was not just about composing and arranging music, because most of the tunes which appeared in the book were taken from earlier publications, manuscripts, and from oral tradition. Writing the first edition of *The Sacred Harp*, White and King were strongly inspired by another book, which was popular at the time, called *The Southern Harmony*, firstly published in South Carolina in 1835.[52] This book was well known among the settlers who were moving from the Carolinas to the lands removed from the Indians, such as Georgia and Alabama. This is why, when another book with the same standard was published, it did not take much time to get popularity among these people.

The relation between *The Southern Harmony* and *The Sacred Harp* hides an important element, which is at the base of the creation of the latest book. As a matter of fact, Walker and White knew each other very well. *The Southern Harmony* was actually written by both of them. The following passage, which clarifies the instance, is an account of from a member of the White family: "Major White and his brother-in-law, William Walker, wrote a music book known…as the Southern Harmony, in four shape notes the same as those used in the Sacred Harp. Walker and White married sisters and lived not far apart in South Carolina. An arrangement was made between them for Walker to go north and have the book published, there being no publishing houses in the south with plant [*sic*] suitable to print the book. Walker took the manuscript, and he and the publishers changed the same without the knowledge or consent of Major White and brought it out under the name of Walker, giving major White no credit whatever for its composition. Walker also entered into a combination with the publishers and in this ay managed to deprive Major White of any interest in the Southern Harmony, although all of the work, or most of it, as done by Major White. On account of this transaction and treatment, the two men never spoke to each other again. It was such an outrage that Major White would never have any thing to do with Walker and he soon moved to Harris County, Georgia and engaged in composing and writing the songs in the Sacred Harp."[53]

In response to this happening, White took some of the songs composed and published in *The Southern Harmony* by Walker, and published them in the *Sacred Harp,* without any

[52] See William Walker, *The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion*, University Press of Kentucky, 1987

[53] See Joseph Stephen James, *A Brief History of the Sacred Harp and its Author*, pag 29-30, as cited by David Warren Steel and Richard H. Hulan in *The Makers of the Sacred Harp*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield, 2010, page 4-5

acknowledgment of the composer. This is how White got his revenge when he had his book published in Philadelphia in 1844.

What is remarkable about this folk tradition is that the Sacred Harp is still popular nowadays. New versions of this hymnbook are reprinted periodically. The tunes collected are not the same in every edition. The collection is always updated with new hymns, written by singers of the Sacred Harp. Some of the old tunes are left out from new editions, to give space to newer and more popular ones. The process of writing songs that will eventually end in the Sacred Harp collection is very interesting. Many of the authors of new hymns report that the creation of their songs happens in a sort of spiritual ecstasy. Writing hymns for the Sacred Harp is not something that every member is able to do. Nevertheless, the Sacred Harp ritual is very democratic: every member has the possibility to lead one song, within a system of rotation, which allows everybody to be a soloist and in the meantime be part of the group.

Black Spirituals

Religion has always been an important part of the lives of African-American people. African-born slaves started to be converted to Christianity by colonial communities not long after they were brought into the Southeast. The process of conversion took place in different ways, and in different times, varying from region to region. Despite this fact, by the mid seventeenth century, a first form of rudimental black spirituals had already been created.[54] Nevertheless, what we intend now as spiritual, started to be common in the southern plantations almost two centuries later. This particular religious music originated by the combination of the music tradition brought from West Africa, and eighteenth Century European Christian hymns. To slave owners, Christianity was seen as "civilizing" force, a means to reconfirm their power on them. What they probably did not foreseen though, was the importance this religion would have become in the slave's struggle for freedom. "Brutally cut off from their cultures, families, and homes, the earliest African slaves found in the figure of the martyred Christ and the religion's promises of deliverance and redemption an iconography and a worldview that spoke to their own plight."(85) Despite this fact, as noted by Dena J. Epstein in *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War,* in the early period of slavery in the South, slave owners did not see any advantage in the

[54] See Claudia Perry, *Halleluja: The Sacred Music of Black America*, in *American Roots Music,* Harry N. Abrams, New York, 2001, page 84

Christianization of the slaves. "[Slave owners] felt no concern for the souls of the slaves. It was left to clergymen to raise the question of converting the slaves to Christianity, and they found it a difficult and thankless task for many years. The saintly pious slave personified by Uncle Tom did not evolve until the second quarter of the nineteenth century."(Epstein 100) Another obstacle for African slaves was the language. The Christian religion required the understanding of principles and dogmas in English. The slaves brought here from West Africa, did not master the language, and therefore, could not participate to the rituals. Nonetheless, their conversion happened quite rapidly. This fact was probably due to their vicinity to the white communities. The white families with whom they lived, probably influenced their religious conversion, introducing them to the Protestant religion.

The same hymns sang in the British Isles, assumed here a completely different connotation. As Jacqueline Cogdell Dje Dje states in her thesis research *American Black Spirituals and Gospel Songs from Southeast Georgia*, the first slaves who arrived in this area, were not aware of the fact that they were going to remain in this land forever. When they did realize that they had no chance of going back to their country, they became African-Americans, and started to adopt the Christian religion as a hope for a better future.

Many of the customs and traditions of African slaves disappeared rapidly after their arrival in the United States. One reason is their constant contact with Euro-American culture, which replaced some of the aspects of the African-American tradition. Another reason, is the fact that slaves' owners, fearing a revolt or any kind of upraise, banned most of the traditions and customs brought from Africa. African slaves could not talk their language anymore, their African names were abandoned, and praying African gods became illegal. In these kinds of circumstances the African-American population adopted the Christian religion. During the beginning of the eighteenth century, missionaries started to arrive in the Southeast. The first missionary, Reverend Samuel Thomas, arrived in the Carolinas in 1702. He described the slaves as "a multitude of ignorant persons to instruct"[55] and required bibles and prayer books, to teach them the language and religion. A few years later, he reported in one of his letters: "There are in the province of South Carolina somewhat more than one thousand slaves, eight hundred of which can speak English tollerably well, and are capable of Christian

[55] Reverend Samuel Thomas, Letters of Rev. Samuel Thomas, 1702-1707, South Carolina Historical Society, as cited by Dena J. Epstein in *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War*, Board of Trustees, Illinois, 2003, page 101

Instruction, many of 'em are desirous of Christian knowledge, great numbers of these can come to the places of our Publick Worship."[56]

The African-American religion devotion was reinforced by another wave of evangelization: The Great Awakening movement of 1734. During this period, a series of religion revivals swept among the American colonies. Samuel Davis, a Presbyterian from Virginia reports: "The books that I principally want for them [African-Americans] are *Watt's Psalms* and hymns, and Bibles… I cannot but observe that the Negroes, above all the human spices that I ever knew, have an Ear for Musick, and a kind of extatic Delight in Plasmody; and there are no books they learn so soon, or take so much pleasure in."[57] At the end of the same century, the Second Great Awakening movement took place[58]. This movement had a huge following in the Southeast, especially among certain European communities, such as the Moravians, whose main interest was evangelization. During this period, the African-American relations to religion was once again confirmed and strengthen. This was the moment in which the spiritual was created. Tradition that would become one of the central elements of the black American folk music. Camp meetings had a strong influence in the development of the spirituals. As I already mentioned in the previous part, dedicated to the white spiritual, both the black and the white community participated to these religious gatherings. The situations in which black and white people gathered together for religious purposes, were the ones that influenced the origin of the spiritual. The African-American spirituals were influenced by African music, but they were pretty much composed in the Anglo-Saxon Hymns tradition. The spirituals tradition is linked to the canon of European religious songs inextricably. "The seven thousand hymns written by Eighteenth-century Methodist pioneer the Reverend Charles Wesley were especially popular, and songs such as "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" relied on old hymn tunes that traveled from Europe with the first settlers."(88) One of the old hymns that were adopted, even here in the Southeast is the famous "Amazing Grace", which was written by John Newton, a British sailor and Anglican clergyman, who became an early slavery abolitionist.

[56] Reverend Samuel Thomas, Documents Concerning Rev. Samuel Thomas, 1702-1707, South Carolina Historical Society, page 39-47, South Carolina Historical Society, Jstore

[57] Samuel Davies, Letters of June 28, 1751, to: "Mr. Bellamy of Bethlem in New England" in Fawcett, Compassionate Address, pag 37, as cited by Dena J. Epstein in Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War, Board of Trustees, Illinois, 2003, page 104

[58] See Claudia Perry, Halleluja: The Sacred Music of Black America, in American Roots Music, Harry N. Abrams, New York, 2001, page 85

Eileen Southern suggests in her book *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, that when Blacks met in secret religious meetings during the early nineteenth century, "they turned away from Protestant psalms and hymns, in favor of music more responsive to their special needs—that is, to songs of their own creation."(Southern 156) As a matter of fact, after the black communities were converted to Protestantism, they started interiorizing this religion. They applied it to their personal situations and conditions as slaves, hoping for a better future, away from slavery. Some scholars believe that spirituals were also used as songs of protest, defiance, revolt, and escape[59]. This is why, in this moment, public gathering were not possible any more. Psalms and old hymns started to be modified, and new ones were introduced. The new religious songs created were preserved by slaves through the oral tradition, at least until Emancipation. In some cases, the spirituals in the Southeast were "partially the result of improvisation, the subsequent oral tradition may have also been improvisatory to some extent."(Dje Dje 2)

Spirituals have been classified into three different groups: the *call and response* chant, which is a long-phrase characterized by the presence of a song leader and the response of a group of singers; the *melody* which is a slow phrase line, with a sustained tempo; and the *syncopated*, which is a segmented melody, which features a fast tempo, that stimulates body movement.[60] As James Weldon Johnson states in *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, spirituals were often written in a dialect that is "the result of the effort of the slave to establish a medium of communication between himself and his master."(42) Interesting example of this type of spiritual singing can still be heard in South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands, where the Gullah dialect have been preserved by the communities of African-Americans.

After the Emancipation, for a few years, spirituals have been abandoned by the black communities. This happened because, African-Americans wanted to revolt against everything connected with slavery, and the spiritual tradition was among these things. Singing the spiritual became a sign of not being educated. After the Civil War, one of the few efforts made for the preservation of the spiritual form, was made by collectors, who started looking for spiritual singers and collected words and melodies of this music.

[59] See Joseph R. Washington, Black Religion: The Negro and Christianity in the United States, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964, pag 308

[60] See Jacqueline Cogdell Dje Dje, American Black Spirituals and Gospel Songs from Southeast Georgia, University of California, Los Angeles, page 2

In 1870s, religious music was established by various black school choirs in the Southeast, so that the spiritual became popular once again. For example, the Fisk Jubilee Singers of Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, became famous throughout the United States for their spirituals performances. Thanks to this kind of schools and organizations, the attitude toward black music changed completely. As a matter of fact, not only this kind of music started appealing the white audience, but it also led the black community to a consciousness and appreciation of its own heritage. Another important institute for the preservation and development of spirituals in the Southeast was Atlanta University, which collected old slave hymns, that can be still consulted.

Before this, spirituals were a personal and religious expression of the slave. Even though, black spirituals nowadays are still a form of religious prayer, they are also considered an art form appreciated by people all around the world.

Generally, spirituals are divided into a four-part harmony, and sung *a cappella* by a choir. They are rarely accompanied by instruments. Over the years, some spirituals lost their folk connotation and their genuine quality, because performed on a stage for an audience not involved in the performance. Despite this fact, there are still black churches were spirituals are sung as a form of prayer. In Atlanta for example, there are a number of churches which keep this tradition alive. The most famous is probably the Ebenezer Baptist Church, founded in 1886, and popular because it was the church in which Martin Luther King served as a pastor. Other churches such as the Cascade United Methodist Church, or the Wheat Street Baptist, are well known centers, too.

After the turn of the twentieth century, American black spirituals evolved into another form, common under the name of gospel. According to Pearl Williams Jones “the rise of gospel music is attributable to several sociological changes within the black community, foremost among which was the steady increase in migration from the south by blacks in search of greater economic opportunities and freedom.”(199)

An African American heritage: Folk cries, shouts and hollers

The slaves’ cries have been one of the first forms of African American music. At first they functioned as calls for help, food or water but they could also be cries of sadness, sorrow or hope for a better condition. Often, slaves used them to communicate with one another or to

send warnings when the master was approaching. This is why, as Leroy Jones explains in *Blues People*, after a while, plantations' owners realized that these kind of rituals could be a way to communicate messages of freedom, and that is why they were suddenly forbidden.[61]

"The ring shout" was a ritual. It was a means to communicate with supernatural spirits and eventually, when the Christian religion spread among slaves, with God. It was a kind of holy dance; its origins are rooted in the West African religious tradition. It consisted in the singing of sacred songs and a rhythmic dancing. The slaves formed a circle and began singing these songs, basically composed of a single stanza also called "walk" and the repetition of a faster chorus. There was a lead singer who sang this walk twice and the chorus answered with the shout. The slaves gathered in the centre of a room or of a square and started dancing; even though everyone would move and sing rhythmically, they participated according to their personal feelings; so that someone would sing aloud or dance faster, and some other would do it silently, maybe just clapping their hands or stomping their feet. At first, when white Americans saw this dance, they described it as something barbaric and primitive, because they did not understand that by singing and dancing to these chants, the shouters reached a state of ecstasy which appeared wired to the eyes of western people.

Storytelling

Storytelling is a folk tradition based on oral history. Music and storytelling in the Southeast have a strong relation. These two traditions were often performed in the same situations: in homes, during communal or group work, such as corn shucking and syrup making, at social gatherings, or in the streets and marketplaces. Storytellers generally, were people who were not formally trained on storytelling. Such as music, folktales are a reflection of culture and society. The aims of storytelling are multiple. Once, they were used to impart moral values and codes of conduct, they explained natural phenomena, and they entertained. Nowadays, the few people who still practice such art do it just for entertainment purposes.

Georgia is one of the richest states in the South in terms of folk stories. According to John A. Burrison, this region has a "strong narrative impulse" that affects many different aspects, such as legal and political oratory, preaching and everyday life. "This thirst for a well-told

[61] See Leroy Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, New York, William Morrow and Company, 1968

story may be rooted in two influential Old World source areas for the South's population, Ireland and Africa, where the institution of community storyteller (the *sennachie* and *griot*) commanded great respect. The insularity of the region's farming population also put a premium on storytelling as entertainment. For many Georgians, oral literature in the form of folktales and legends took the place of novels and history books until the twentieth century brought greater access to literacy through public schools and libraries."[62]

There are different varieties of folk tales in the Southeast. The most ancient type is the one that generated in the Cherokee communities. Generally, these tales deal with the creation of the world and give explanation to natural phenomena. Unfortunately, these folk tales disappeared from the Southeast almost completely, with the forced removal of the Indians from this land.

Another form of old tales, very influential in the development of folk music, is the type of storytelling that has its origin in the British Isles. The place where it can still be heard is the mountains of Appalachia. In this place, until not very long ago, it was common to hear folk stories told by "folk people". This kind of people were generally able to play an instrument such as the banjo or the fiddle, and many times they also practiced folk medicine, a peculiar kind of medicine based on rituals and the employment of medicinal plants from the woods[63].

The African-American storytelling tradition is probably the most important in terms of influence in music. What influenced folk music was not the tale in itself, but the way it was told. As a matter of fact, the rhythm, and the lyrics of folk songs are very similar to storytelling. The aim is often the same: tell a story or impart a lesson. African-American folktales have their roots in West Africa. Nonetheless, some of the tales told by African-American in the Southeast were influenced by the English storytelling tradition. An example is "the Lord and the Devil dividing Souls", a story in which John (a common character in the African American folklore of the South) and his master hear two people dividing potatoes in a cemetery and, without seeing them, are convinced they are God and Satan diving souls on the Judgment Day. This story recorded in Georgia by a folklore student during the 1970s, was actually found in a sixth century manuscript in Great Britain.

[62] See John A. Burrison, Storytelling Traditions, New Georgia Encyclopedia
[63] Based on Boone, North Carolina

One of the most common themes in the African American tales tradition pertains animals. The animals protagonist of these story have fixed characters and behave like humans. Brer rabbit is one of the most popular. Joel Chandler Harris, a Georgia writer active during the late nineteenth century, in his book *Uncle Remus*, transcribed a number of tales taken from this tradition. In this way, many of the folk tales of the southeastern African-American tradition survived and became popular throughout the United States. Animal tales have their origin in West Africa, where these kinds of tales are still popular. Animals are not the only characters that appear in the African-American storytelling tradition. John usually represents the African American. This character is often part of the Old Master series. These stories, which were common throughout the South of the United States, are metaphors of the slavery time. Usually, the main characters have to fight against an antagonist who may be a big animal or a brutal master. They almost always succeed in fighting the evil with tricks and witticism.[64] Jack is another common character in the southeastern storytelling tradition. This is a typical character of the Appalachian Mountains, where the stories are generally set. The so called "Jack tales" are part of the white tradition; we find these kinds of tales from North Carolina to Georgia. They basically deal with Jack, a "clever young hero" and the Hick family.[65] Being storytelling part of the oral tradition, it is quite common to find different versions of the same story.

What is folk music?

Folk music that developed in the Southeast of the United States is the most ancient form of music in this country. The term "folk music" stands for a particular kind of music that was passed from generation to generation through oral tradition. Folk music in the Southeast originated with the encounter of different cultures and different styles imported in this area by the different ethnic groups that moved here. This was a long process that started during the colonial period and it is characterized by the use of acoustic instruments. Electrification arrived later during the 1920, but it did not establish itself before the 1930, when the music core moved from the South to the North in places such as Chicago and New York. By this

[64] See Patricia Liggins Hill (general editor), Bernard W. Bell (editor), Trudier Harris (editor), William J. Harris (editor), R. Baxter Miller (editor), Sondra A. O'Neale (editor)., *Call and Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition,* Boston Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH), 1997

[65] See John A. Burrison, *Storytelling Traditions*, New Georgia Encyclopedia

time, folk music had already become a classified genre listened and appreciated throughout the United States.

The adaptation of a definite and personal style, that the people recognized as their own in the Southeast happened all of a sudden, during the course of the nineteenth century. “In 1800 Georgians were still singing ‘Yankee Doodle’ with nationalistic pride in the streets of Savannah. Sixty years later they were whistling ‘Dixie.’ The songs stand as musical bookends to the antebellum period and illustrate the monumental and wrenching change from the youthful cockiness of a union newly formed to the calamity of disunion. Between these touchstones, a great wealth of many types of music was heard in Georgia.”[66]

With the Civil War every state matured a personal identity, which was not only political but cultural as well. In this cultural outburst, different genres such as the blues, country and protest songs emerged in the Southeast. In the development of these different types of music, the geographic factor played a major role. In a period in which the few roads existent were unpaved and means of transportation were still primitive, geographical barriers such as the Appalachian Mountains or the Ocean that divided the Sea Islands from the mainland, constituted authentic cultural borderlines. This is why, for example, the Gullah dialect[67] has been preserved for years in the costal regions, just like the hillbilly music genre in the mountain areas.

This geographic separation did not prevent people from sharing their different cultures. The reason why folk music is so interesting and diversified in the United States, has been determined by the fact that every musician would “borrow from his neighbor”, overcoming class and racial barriers, in a world that was paradoxically divided by segregation and racial laws.

Even though sometimes it is almost impossible to distinguish one genre from another, there are particular music and stylistic forms that developed within a particular genre. These features characterize every different type of music. What follows is a general outline of the different styles that developed in the Southeast during the nineteenth century. This kind of

[66] Ron Byrnside, Antebellum Music, 3/03/2006,
[67] The Gullah dialect is a language spoken in the southeastern costal area and in the Sea Islands. It is a mixture of old fashion English and West African dialects.

division should be taken with a certain degree of reservation, or better, considering the many influences that one genre had on another.

Piedmont Blues

Although the blues genre probably flourished before the 1870s, this term began to be common in America just after the turn of the twentieth century. Generally, rural blues is associated with the Delta or the Mississippi area in general. Nevertheless, the blues that originated in the Southeast of the United States, common with the name of Piedmont Blues, is not less fascinating.

The Piedmont region, where the blues developed, is the costal area that extends from Virginia to Georgia, reaching the mountain foothills of Appalachia (Lowlands and Uplands). The reason why the blues in this region took a life of its own, separate from the rest of the South, is probably due to cultural and economic reasons. Stefano Isidoro Bianchi, in his *Prewar Folk "The Old Weird America": 1900-1940*, argues that the difference of the Piedmont Blues from the Delta Blues is first of all a social difference. He claims that, despite the fact that slavery was a common practice throughout all the southern states of the United States, Southeast included, in this area slaves were not subjected to the unfair treatment that was common in states such as Mississippi and Texas. Here white and black workers shared the same "burden", performing the same tasks, in a relation that in some ways was more equal. Unfortunately this is not completely true. As a matter of fact, it is really impossible to establish whether slavery was harder in the Delta than in Georgia for example, where the economy was based on cotton plantations and agriculture, so that this practice was not only commonly employed but also as harsh as in other states of the South. What is true about what Bianchi says in his book though, is that in some part of the Southeast, especially in North Carolina, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the white population exceeded in number the black one.[68] This fact had a strong impact in the origin of the blues in this land. The black population developed a kind of music that was strongly influenced by the European tradition, brought in this land by white immigrants. They made use of fiddles, and they distinguished themselves for the thumb/index-finger picking style on the guitar. On the other side, whites appropriated themselves of the banjo, transforming it into a white

[68] See George Pullen Jackson, White and Negro Spirituals: Their Life Span and Kinship: Tracing 200 Years of Untrammeled Song Making, Da Capo Press, Boston, 1975, page 174

instrument. The reason why black musician abandoned the banjo in this area, is told by Bruce Bastin in *Red River Blues*: “The parody of the Negro in minstrelsy could be tolerated by blacks at a time of lesser social change. As social distance grew to physical and psychological distance, intensified beyond all earlier belief after 1896, this stereotyping, once tolerable as crude but harmless humor, became directly offensive. The banjo, ubiquitous instrument of the minstrel stage, embodied this stereotyping, just as later, the watermelon and headscarf would take similar roles. In the Georgia Sea Islands the term “putting on the banjo” became synonymous with ridicule, as the banjo was used to accompany songs of ridicule or criticism directed against erring members of the community.”(Bastin 12) This probably happened, because after the Civil War, with the introduction of the Jim Crow Laws, the social condition for black people got worse. As a consequence of this situation, the minstrel kind of fun was not tolerated anymore and black musicians abandoned the banjo.

If on the one the social integration between the black and the white community resulted impossible for years, on the other hand, the cultural separation proved to be impossible. The two different communities kept borrowing music and styles one from the other, to an extent that sometimes, it is really hard to distinguish whether an artist is black or white.

This kind of music remained mainly acoustic and disappeared almost completely after the beginning of the Second World War. These are probably the reasons why it has always been associated more with folk rather than with the blues. Pete Lowry explains the fall of the Piedmont Blues in these terms: “There were many reasons for its decline, including World War II, a ban on recording by the musicians union from 1942 to 1944, as well as changes in tastes. By the time the recording industry was back in full swing after the war, the audience clamored for newer things, and amplified instruments and tape recordings altered things completely.” (Lowry 92)

Before its decline in the 1940s, this kind of music had been really successful, and Atlanta was a central and determinant place for it. First of all, it was the most important recording center, significant both for blues but also, before Nashville became the capital of country music, for white folk music. There are different reasons why, during the first half of the twentieth century, recording labels were so interested in the Atlanta area. In this period, the rise of the industry in the Southeast, led to a great migration for the country to the city. Atlanta was a fast growing city, where the textile industry played a major role. Many of the

musicians, who moved here, from the surrounding areas, would work in factories during the day and perform at night or during their spare time. Despite this fact, not every musicians who recorded in Atlanta lived here, many just passed through and stopped to record; others stayed in Atlanta temporary during the great migration to the North. As Bruce Bastin tells us: "Atlanta rapidly became a center for blues recording, featuring not only Georgia artists, but also artists from other southern states, a blues melting pot. The Mississippi Sheiks, the Memphis Jug Band, Blind Willie Johnson from Texas, Ed Bell from Alabama, Willie Walker and Pink Anderson from South Carolina, among many, all recorded there."(102)

If we exclude rare occasions, such as the research trip made by Alan Lomax, Zora Neale Hurston and Elizabeth Barnicle in 1934, the study of the Piedmont Blues has been neglected for years. The black musical heritage of this land is still known nowadays thank to the recording industry. Names such as Blind Willie McTell, Ma Rainy, Elizabeth Cotten, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, would probably be unknown now if the recording labels did not stop in Atlanta. The reason of the recording industry on this genre was based on the fact that, especially during the 1930s, the Piedmont style was a major seller. Some of the bands recorded during this period, got a discreet success and were even able to leave their State to tour, for example the Star Band from Atlanta. Despite this fact, the majority of these musicians never got rich by these recordings, because in one way or another, the recording labels always managed not to pay the royalties to their artists. It was just with the arrival of the folk revival of the 1960s that something changed, but unfortunately, not every author had the chance to take advantage of this situation, any many musicians died in poverty.

Mountain Folk and Country Blues

The Appalachian region, which extends from Virginia to Georgia, is without any doubt the ancient core of American folk music. As previously mentioned, this was the place were the European tradition of ballads was preserved and developed; where the first researches on traditional music were conducted by scholars such as Cecil Sharp, Olive Dame Campbell and later Alan Lomax.

Early folk music in this area was generally very simple. The songs were both performed without any instrumental accompaniment (generally sung by women) and with the accompaniment of string instruments such as the fiddle, the banjo, the guitar and later the mandolin. The music tradition developed as a family entertainment practiced at home.

During the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, it was quite common among these settlements to find entire families dedicated to the music practice. Not by chance, one of the first and the most important bands from Appalachia was the Carter Family.

Nature plays a major role in this type of music. A kind of idyllic image emerges from the lyrics, which are often connected with nature (Blue Ridge Mountain Blues, The Cuckoo Bird, Wildwood Flower, just to name a few). The Kentucky style called Blue Grass originated in this kind of environment.

Once again, blacks and whites influenced each-others in the creation of this kind of music. "Early recordings by rural musicians in the 1920s and 1930s show that the repertoire was drawn from a wide circle of sources: traditional folk tunes and ballads, gospel songs, original disaster narratives, and even popular vaudeville tunes. Black and white rural music was harder to separate stylistically before recording had helped create separate markets, and there were black string bands whose song lists were similar to those of the white ensembles." (Unterbereg, Hicks, Dempsey 91)

Another variety of traditional songs that are part of the history of the folk music tradition in this area is the lullaby. Ballads for children are one of the ancient examples found in this region. Some of them were imported from the British Isles ("Go To Sleep Little Baby" for example) and some of them are still popular nowadays. Not every song intended as a lullaby is pleasant. Many of the songs that we find in this tradition can be disturbing. They often refer to the hardship of growing a child. One of the best examples is "What'll I Do with this Baby-O?", an old song from Kentucky, where the singer refers to many different "unconventional" ways to calm a baby down, such as giving him liquor and cooking him for dinner.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, many of the rural settlers who populated the Southeast moved to bigger centers looking for better occupations, and Atlanta was one of these places. "With its growing industry and business opportunities, the city was attracting into its magnificent field a flood of Georgia countryfolk, both black and white, who, because of the unstable price of cotton, the devastating effects of the boll weevil, the growing shift from near self-sufficiency to dependence on a cash economy, and exploitation by the tenant farming system, were fleeing their small, increasingly inefficient farms to work

as mill-hands, domestics, or tradesmen in the big city."(Burrison 59) They left their rural homes behind, they abandoned their soil, but they brought with them some of their folk traditions, and music was among them. As a consequence of this massive migration, the country-folk tradition established itself in Atlanta, where in 1913 the first Old Fiddlers' Convention took place. Throughout the next decade, Downtown Atlanta hosted many other music conventions, and music following was extremely impressive. This gold age for Georgia music ended with the beginning of World War II, and by the end of it, Atlanta had already been replaced by Nashville, Tennessee.

Protest Songs

In the history of southeastern music, protest songs occupy an important role. Protest songs are the result of the discontent of oppressed people, who expressed this feeling in the song form. John Greenway, in his book dedicated to the folksongs of protests, gives us a perfect description of this music genre, which developed in the United States during the eighteenth century. "These [protest folksongs] are the struggle songs of the people. They are outbursts of bitterness, of hatred for the oppressor, of determination to endure hardship together and to fight for a better life. Whether they are ballads composed and sung by an individual, or rousing songs improvised on the picket line, they are imbued with the feeling of communality, or togetherness. They are songs of unity, and therefore most are songs of union."(10) As a matter of fact, many protest songs, originated precisely among union workers, who rebelled against unfair work conditions. They are always the expression of a common feeling and they are rarely individualistic. The folk composer has to talk to the people, doing so, the community is able to identify itself in his songs. Even though protest singers can be known, most of the time, the origin of a protest song is difficult to trace. It is often a collage of different styles and sources of inspiration that can go from sacred music to traditional melodies. "Making a union song in the rural South is a simple process of taking a gospel hymn, changing "I" to "We" and "God" to "CIO"."(12) The union in the Southern communities became a sort of extension of the church. Greenaway continues his report of folksongs of protest in the South, citing Joe Glazer, a musician and textile union organizer, who recalled a Georgia strike in which a picket line stand was called the "ministers' post" because there were four clergymen in it. Other protest songs were readapted from other

contexts. For example, some songs were taken from the old slave songs tradition and readapted to a different context, such as the rebellion against businessmen in Georgia.[69]

Generally, protest songs are written in the ballad tradition. Just like in traditional ballads, the singer tells a story. What is really interesting about their relation with old ballads is that the format is basically the same, while the content is completely different. Traditional ballads deal with the splendor of an era in which kings and queens are the protagonist. On the contrary, in protest songs the protagonists are exploited people from the lower classes. This kind of roles turnover is part of the protest itself. The upper levels of society are not the center of attention anymore, because the ballads singers, who have always belonged to the lower classes, moved their attention to their own situation, rather than singing about "the lily-white fingers of [their] mistress."(Greenway 1)

The history of protest songs is very long and, to define when this particular tradition begun is almost impossible. American folksongs of protest have probably their roots in the British Isles. After this tradition was brought into the United States, it was adapted to the new conditions and situations of this land. The first protest songs in the United States were probably the ones against the British supremacy and colonial power. Although, the heyday of southeastern protest songs was definitely the first three decades of the twentieth century. In this period, the southeastern industry was growing. Textile work and coal mining were two of the major activities practiced. Singers like Aunt Molly Jackson from Kentucky, would sing different songs related to the class struggle in such environments.

Textile factories and coalmines were upon the most common locations where this kind of songs originated, nevertheless, they were not the only ones. Other protest songs originated among farmers, prisoners and chain gang workers. The sad reality of chain gangs was well known in the Southeast. As a matter of fact, Kentucky was the first state in the United States to adopt this practice in 1825, while Georgia, was last sate to abandon it in 1955.[70] Chain gangs were a form of punishment, which consisted in chaining a group of prisoners together, and forcing them to work in really harsh conditions. Prisoners of the chain gangs of Kentucky, Georgia, North Carolina, Florida and Tennessee were mainly employed in the construction of railroads and public roads. During this heavy work, prisoners were allowed

[69] See Donald Lee Grant, Jonathan Grant, The Way it was in the South: The Black experience in Georgia, The University of Georgia Press, Athens and London, 1995, page 408

[70] See Mitiche P. Roth, *Prisons and Prison Systems: A Global Encyclopedia*, Greenwood press, 2006, page 57

to sing. The reason why they were permitted to sing was not determined by the clemency of guards and officers. This happened because following the rhythm of music, prisoners would work harder and faster.

Chain gangs songs were songs sung *a cappella*, based on a *call and response* pattern. A leader would sing a phrase and the rest of the group would call out in response. As evidenced by some of the recordings of old chain gang songs, inmates would often use the throbbing sound of their tools as a back beat for their chanting and singing. This pulsating driving rhythm would help keep a worker going through the over strenuous demands that were placed on them. When listening to some of these rare recordings, it is easy to imagine how this kind of songs could help the prisoners to get through the day with their strong rhythm and feelings. The songs may have been all they had against the slave-like conditions they were forced into.

The book "I am a fugitive from a Georgia Chain Gang" was published in 1932. This book, which soon became a best seller throughout the United States, is considered one of the reasons why this rough practice was abolished in the South during the mid twentieth century.[71] The following passage, taken from Robert E. Burns is a description of the conditions in which chain gang workers were forced to live: "A heavy steel shackle was riveted on each ankle, and a heavy chain (similar to a trace chain) was permanently fixed to connect the shackles. There were thirteen links in the chain—making it impossible to take a full step. This was known as the "strad" chain. In the middle of the chain (which ran from ankle to ankle) another chain was fixed. This chain was three feet long and on the end there was an iron ring about as big as a silver dollar. This was called the upright chain. In order to walk it was necessary to hold this last chain in your hand, to keep it from trailing on the ground."(47)

[71] Even if it is hard to believe, chain gangs were readopted for a brief period during the 1990s in states such as Alabama.

Ballads: When American Music Takes Shapes

John Henry

John Henry is one of the most ancient ballads of the African-American tradition. The origins of this song are lost, so that we do not know who wrote this song and where exactly it originated. Many different versions were found in the South of the United States and in the eastern costal area, where during the 1930s, John and Alan Lomax recorded two of the many existing versions, one of which is reported below.[72] The first version I chose was played by Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, and released on Smithsonian Folkways. It was brought from Tennessee to the Carolinas during the 1930s.

John Henry represents the epic of man against the machine. The protagonist was a steel-driver who built railroads in the mountains. In order to save his job and the jobs of his fellow-mates he challenges the machine that is supposed to replace their manual work. He ménages to beat it, but he eventually collapses after the effort and dies. This figure is always represented as a strong black man with a hammer in his hand. John Henry has become an important hero for the working-class, an archetype and one of the most important protagonist of the American folklore. Nonetheless, many of the songs about him do not necessary deal with the fight against the machine, but they explore other aspects of his life, such as the relationship with his woman or the hard work in general. The first version here reported is particularly interesting because hints at John Henry's wife, whose name in this song is Polly Ann. This figure is crucial in the development of the story, because when John Henry gets sick, she is the one who keeps up with his work, so that the protagonist can win in the end. The second version presents this figure as well, her name here is Lucy Ann and she has the same role. Nevertheless, she is not the only female character in this ballad. As a matter of fact, the first woman we encounter is not John Henry's wife, her name is Mary Magdalene. Her role is not very relevant in the development of the story, but it emphasizes the figure of John Henry, who in the story was a legend even before dying.

The many versions recorded or orally handed down, are often a collage of different songs, and most of the times they do not follow a precise chronological and narrative order. Even

[72] The recording was made in Fenwick Island, Maryland. The two versions of the ballad were transcribed and published in John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, Dover Publications, New York, 1994, page 3

the space changes according to the different versions: as Alessandro Roffeni points out, sometimes the story takes place in Louisiana instead of West Virginia.[73] Sometimes John digs, sometimes he rails spikes, and sometimes, as in this case he "drives hammer". The only stanza that is repeated in the majority of the different versions is: "John Henry said to his Captain / A man is nothing but a man / But before I let your steam drill beat me down / I'll die with this hammer in my hand". Which can be interpreted as a revolt against the oppressor, or more generally the fight of the man against technology. Myth and realism, tragedy and humor, love and revenge mingle together.

The two versions here reported have many elements in common. The most significant parts of the song are very similar in the two versions, even though the stanzas do not respect the same order. The first one, is one of the most common in the Southeast, it was interpreted by two of the most important Piedmont Blues musicians: Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee. The second one is taken from the book *American Ballads and Folk Songs,* by John A. Lomax and his son Alan.

The peculiarity of this song is that this is not just a simple ballad. It is part of the American storytelling tradition, it is a protest song and a work song. It was sung and performed in completely different situations: at home and in penitentiaries, on stage and during work.

John Henry

When John Henry was a little baby
sitting on his daddy's knee
pointed his finger out to a little piece of steel
Steel's gonna be the death of me, Lord, Lord,
steel's gonna be the death of me,
Well, now steel's gonna be the death of me, Lord, Lorc
steel's gonna be the death of me.

John Henry told his captain one day
before I will let you steam drill beat me down
Would die with this hammer in my hand, Lord, Lord,

John Henry

John Henry was a little baby, uh-huh,
Sittin' on his mama's knee, oh, yeah,
Said: "De Big Bend Tunnel and de C. & O. road
Gonna cause de death of me,
Lawd, Lawd, gonna cause de death of me."

John Henry, he had a woman,
Her name was Mary Magdalene,
She would go to de tunnel and sing for John,
Jes' to hear John henry's hammer ring,
Lawd, Lawd, jes' to hear John henry's hammer ring.

[73] For more information see Alessandro Roffeni*, Blues, Ballate e Canti di Lavoro Afroamericani*, Newton Compton, Roma, 1977, page 288

die with this hammer in my hand

I would die with this hammer in my hand, Lord,

die with this hammer in my hand

John Henry had a little woman her name was Polly Ann

John Henry got sick and had to go to bed

You know Polly she drove steel like a man Lord Lord

Polly she drove steel like a man

How she drive?

John Henry drivin' on the right hand side

Steam drill drivin' on the left

Before I will let your steam drill beat me down

I will drive my poor self to death, Lord, Lord

Drive my poor self to death

John Henry drove steel on the Southern

He drove steel on the C&O

He drove steel for that Big Ben Tunnel

Steel drivin' kill John you know

Steel drivin' kill John you know

Well now steel drivin' kill John you know Lord Lord

Steel drivin' kill John you know

Some says John Henry was born in Texas

Some people thinks he was born in Maine

John Henry was born down in Tennessee

He was a leader of a steel-driving-gang Lord Lord

Leader of a steel-driving-gang

Was a leader of a steel-driving-gang Lord Lord

John Henry had a li'l woman,

Her name was Lucy Ann,

John Henry took sick an' had to go to bed,

Lucy Ann drove steel like a man,

Lawd, Lawd, Lucy Ann drove steel like a man.

John Henry was hammerin' on the mountain,

An' his hammer was strikin' fire,

He drove so hard till he broke his pore heart,

An' he lied down his hammer an' he died,

Lawd, Lawd, he lied down his hammer an' he died.

All de womens in de Wes',

When dey heard of John Henry's death,

Stood in the rain, flagged de eas'-boun' train,

Goin' where John Henry fell dead.

John Henry lil mother,

She was all dressed in red,

She jumped in bed, covered up her head,

Said she didn't know her son was dead'

Lawd, Lawd, she didn't know her son was dead.

John Henry had a pretty lil woman,

An'de dress she wo' was blue,

An' de las' words she said to him:

"John Henry I've been true to you,

Lawd, Lawd, John henry I've been true to you."

"Oh, who's gonna shoe yo' lil feetses,

An' who's gonna glub yo' han's,

Leader of a steel-driving-gang

Well the captain loved to see John Henry

One of all loved to hear him sing

but most of all that the paymaster loved

He just loved to get John Henry's hammer ring

He just loved to get John Henry's hammer ring

He just loved to get John Henry's hammer ring Lord Lord

Loved to get John Henry's hammer ring

They carried John Henry on the mountain

upon a mountain so high

Last words I heard that poor boy say:

Give me a cool drink of water 'fore I die

Give me a cool drink of water 'fore I die

Give me a cool drink of water 'fore I die

Well they carried John Henry's body to the White House

and they laid it in the sand

Every time a locomotive follows go rollin' by they say:

"Yonder lays a steel-drivin' man

Well now yonder lays a steel-drivin' man

They say yonder lays a steel-drivin' man

Yonder lays a steel-drivin' man"

An' who's gonna be yo' man,

Lawd, Lawd, an' who's gonna be yo' man?"

"Oh, my mama's gonna shoe my lil feetses,

An' my papa's gonna glub my lil han's,

An' my siste's gonna kiss my rosy, rosy lips,

An' I don' need no man'

Lawd, Lawd, an' I don' need no man."

Dey took John Henry to de graveyard,

An' dey buried him in de san',

An' every locomotive come roarin' by,

Says, "Dere lays a steel-drivin' man,

Lawd, Lawd, dere lays a steel-drivin' man."

The Ballad of Little Mary Phagan

This ballad was written and composed by Fiddlin' John Carson in 1915, two years after Mary Phagan, a thirteen-year-old employee at a pencil factory, was murdered in Atlanta.[74] According to

[74] See Leonard Dinnerstain, *The Leo Frank Case*, The University of Georgia Press, Athens, 2008, page 1

popular belief, this ballad was written on the steps of the Fulton County Courthouse while waiting for the verdict of this case. This song narrates the last hours of Mary Phangan and her murder.

Local sentiment was strongly against Leo Frank, the superintendent of the National Pencil Company, where this girl worked. The general opposition to Leo Frank was not dictated by evidence of murder, but rather, by his provenience and his religion. As a matter of fact, he came from New York and he was Jewish. For the local people, this symbolized the northern industrialist oppression of the poor factory worker in the exploited South. Fiddlin' John Carson took advantage of this climate to write his song, not completely foreseeing the consequences of his action. Leo Frank, first incriminated of murder, was later discharged. The judge who proclaimed this sentence, was forced to leave Atlanta with his family, right after the verdict he emitted. He feared a reprisal by the population, who was unanimously lined up against Leo Frank. He would come back in town just ten years later.[75] Leo Frank was eventually kidnapped by some prominent people from the prison, and then lynched in Marietta, a town North of Atlanta, where Mary Phagan came from. Years later, evidences proved that the killer was actually the watchman of the factory Jim Coney, but the case was never reopen.

Mary Phagan's parents were farmers. They moved from the country to Atlanta looking for job. The day in which she was murdered, she was at the factory, where she worked, "to pick up her $1.20 pay for the twelve hours she had worked that week."[76] This is one of the reason why to Fiddlin' John Carson, this story was really appealing. First of all, this was a period in which, protest songs among factory workers had a great success. This case, according to the public opinion, was the evidence of the submission of factory workers to the power of industry, and Fiddlin' John Carson took the part of the exploited workers. Moreover, we have to consider that Mary Phagan was a young girl, her murder and the probable sexual abuse conveyed a general feeling of disgust throughout the country. This feeling, boosted by the news on radio and newspapers, saw Leo Frank, the "Yankee Jew" condemned as the scapegoat. In this particular atmosphere, a song like "The Ballad of Little Mary Phagan" found a wide consent, and in some extents, was probably one of the causes of the lynching of Leo Frank.

[75] See Leonard Dinnerstain, *The Leo Frank Case*, The University of Georgia Press, Athens, 2008, page 3
[76] See Leonard Dinnerstain, *Leo Frank Case*, New Georgia Encyclopedia, Updated 8/03/2009

On the day of the lynching, Carson performed this song in front of a huge crowd at the Marietta Court-House, he sung his song over and over, until Leo Frank was killed.[77] After the brutal killing, people would sell postcards of the lynching. What is curious, is that Fiddlin' John Carson never recorded this song. Her daughter, Moonshine Kate recorded the piece on guitar years later.[78] John Carson recorded another song about Mary Phagan, which is called "The Grave of Mary Phagan", but it was actually composed by another musician from Atlanta: Reverend Andrew Jenkins.

Mary Phagan murder case is, with all probability, still the most famous in Georgia. A number of books have been written about it, two movies and a television series were released during the course of the twentieth century. After a few years, people started reconsidering the position of Leo Frank, and finally in 1986 the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles pardoned Frank, stating: "Without attempting to address the question of guilt or innocence, and in recognition of the State's failure to protect the person of Leo M. Frank and thereby preserve his opportunity for continued legal appeal of his conviction, and in recognition of the State's failure to bring his killers to justice, and as an effort to heal old wounds, the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, in compliance with its Constitutional and statutory authority, hereby grants to Leo M. Frank a Pardon."[79]

The two versions here reported are very similar one with the other. This is due to the fact that the author of this song is known and the copyrights of this tune have been protected with the recording. Despite this fact, this is a song that became really popular in Georgia, and started to be orally transmitted and changed slightly over the years. This is why, nowadays we can find different versions of it, with different names (for example Mary Fagan or Little Mary Phagan). Even though the lyrics may differ a little bit, the gist of the song remains the same.

Mary Fagan

Little Mary Fagan
She left her home one day
She went to the pencil factory
To get a little pay

Little Mary Phagan

Little Mary Phagan,
She left her home one day;
She went to the pencil-factory
To see the big parade.

[77] See Harry Golden, *A Little Girl is Dead*, World Publications, East Bridgewater, 1975, page 288
[78] The Ballad of Mary Phagan, Okeh Records, 1925.
[79] The Board of Pardon and Parole, as cited in Leonard Dinnerstain, Leo Frank Case, New Georgia Encyclopedia, Updated 8/03/2009

She left her home at seven
She kissed her mother goodbye
But not one time did th poor child
Think she was going to die

She met a man in th road
With a brutal heart, you know
He smiled and said, little Mary
You'll go home no more

He followed along behind her
Till he came to th middle room
He laughed and said, little Mary
You've met your fatal doom

David was th watchman
And when he wound th key
Away down in th basement
Little Mary, he could see

He called upon th policemen
Their names I do not know
He went to th pencil factory
And told Newt, he must go

Her Mother, she was weeping
She wept and mourned all day
She prayed to meet her baby
In a better world some day

She left her home at eleven,
She kissed her mother good-by;
Not one time did the poor child think
That she was a-going to die.

Leo Frank he met her
With a brutish heart, we know;
He smiled, and said, "Little Mary,
You won't go home no more."
[…]
Down upon her knees
To Leo Frank she plead;
He taken a stick from the trash-pile
And struck her across the head.

Tears flow down her rosy cheeks
While the blood flows down her back;
Remembered telling her mother
What time she would be back.

You killed little Mary Phagan,
It was on one holiday;
Called for old Jim Conley
To carry her body away.
[…]
Newtley was the watchman
Who went to wind his key;
Down in the basement
Little Mary he did see.
[…]
Taken him to the jail-house,
They locked him in a cell;

Poor old innocent negro
Knew nothing for to tell.
[..]
Now little Mary's mother
She weeps and mourns all day,
Praying to meet little Mary
In a better world some day.

Now little Mary's in Heaven,
Leo Frank's in jail,
Waiting for the day to come
When he can tell his tale.

Frank will be astonished
When the angels come to say,
"You killed little Mary Phagan;
It was on one holiday."

Judge he passed the sentence,
Then he reared back;
If he hang Leo Frank,
It won't bring little Mary back.

Frank he's got little children,
And they will want for bread;
Look up at their papa's picture,
Say, "Now my papa's dead."

Judge he passed the sentence
He reared back in his chair;
He will hang Leo Frank,
And give the negro a year.

Next time he passed the sentence,

You bet, he passed it well;

Well, Solister H. M.

Sent Leo Frank to hell.

The Ballad of the Boll Weevil

This song originated among the African-American community in the South and later became popular also in the white communities of farmers. The Boll Weevil is a little insect, which arrived in the United States from Latin America, around the turn of the twentieth century. This parasite was the cause of a real catastrophe in the rural South, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, when from Texas it arrived in the Southeast, affecting Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina in particular.

The boll weevil is a little bug, which mostly feeds on cotton, it eats the flowers and cotton buds of the plants, making the cotton production impossible. In an era in which the southern economy lived primarily on cotton plantations, the boll weevil has been a great natural disaster. It forced a large number of farmers to leave their land and move to bigger cities, looking for other types of occupations.[80]

The problem farmers had with the boll weevil was that, before pesticides such as DDT were introduced (the boll weevil eventually developed a resistance on that, too), was that killing it was really impossible. James C. Giesen in his book *Boll Weevil Blues*, reports the account a farmer made about the boll weevil in the early 1903: "A man sitting on the back of the room rouse on his feet [during a meeting to discuss about the measures to take against the spreading of the insect] and stated that 'it was impossible to fight the weevil'. The pest was proof 'against everything that has been tried', the farmer claimed. The man explained that only a few days earlier, he had captured a few live weevils and put them in a jar of 'ninety-five percent of pure alcohol.' Four hours later he poured out the jar and the bugs emerged alive 'only staggering

[80] See John A Burrison, Fiddlers in the Alley: Atlanta as an Early Country Music Center, Altanta Historical Bulletin, Atlanta, 1977, page 56

drank'. Dumbfounded, the farmer collected the inebriated insects 'sealed them in a tin can, threw them into a bush heap and set it on fire.' A few minutes later, he watched as 'the solder melted and the red-hot weevils flew out and set the barn on fire.'"(1) During the 1920s the situation got even worse. The farmers in the Southeast had two possibilities, either to leave the farm or to change the type of farming. Eventually, the second option seemed really profitable. As a matter of fact, during the Great Depression, the farms that did not rely entirely on cotton ménage to survive during the worst years.[81] Moreover, the introduction of a new type of agriculture helped diversifying the crops introducing the cultivation of peanuts and pecans that later become symbols of the southeastern economy. This is the reason why in the town of Enterprise, Alabama a statue was erected to celebrate the parasite that saved the economy.

The Ballad of the Boll Weevil was written in a period in which there was nothing positive in the arrival of this insect. We are not sure about the identity of the person who wrote this song. The first version recorded is the one sung by Lead Belly in 1934. Over the years, a lot of different versions emerged. The most common in the Southeast is probably the one recorded by Blind Willie McTell. The power of this song is the capacity to combine irony, enumerating all the ways to try to get rid of the insect, but in the meantime, showing sweetness and comprehension toward it (He's just looking for a home) and for the farmer wife who is left without her cotton dress. Everything mingles with a feeling of desperation, because in the end the farmer identifies himself with the boll weevil, who is just looking for a home.

The second version written below is called "The New Bo-Weavil Blues". As the title hints in itself, this version is different from any other recorded in the Southeast. What renders this song so unique in terms of content is the fact that Ma Rainey does not talk about the boll weevil directly; she uses the boll weevil to talk about something else. As Sandra R. Lieb explains: "The beauty and the power of this song arise from the conflicting images of the woman, conveying her ambivalence and shifting states of feeling: the tough, lone boll weevil, 'who has been out a great long time'; the experience-wise woman who fears the complication of a new lover; the lonely, vulnerable woman whose new hat brings her no pleasure, with no one to show it to."(88) The reason why I chose to report this version, even if it deals with a totally different subject, is because it is an example of how the boll weevil entered people lives in the Southeast.

[81] John A Burrison, Lecture

De Ballit of the Boll Weevil

Oh, have you heard de lates',
De lates' of de songs?
It's about them little Boll Weevils,
Deyy's picked up bofe feet an'gone
A-lookin' for a home,
Jes a-lookin' for a home.
The farmer took the bollweevil
And put him in the sand;
An' the bollweevil said to the farmer,
"I'll stand it like a man,
for it is my home,
For it is my home, home."

De Boll Wevil is a little bug
F'um Mexico, dey say,
He come to try dis Texas soil
En thought he better stay,
A-lookin' for a home,
Jes a-lookin' for a home.

De nigger say to de Boll Weevil
"Whut makes yo' head so red?"
"I's been wanderin' de whole worl' ovah
Till it's a wonder I ain't dead,
A-lookin' for a home,
Jse a-lookin' for a home."

First time I saw Mr. Boll Weevil,
He wuz on de western plain;
Next time I saw him,
He wuz ridin' on a Memphis train,

The New Bo-Weavil Blues

Hey, bo-weavil , don't sing them blues no more
Hey, hey, bo-weavil, don't sing them blues no more Bo-weavil's here, bo-weavil's everywhere you'll go

I'm a lone bo-weavil, been out a great long time
I'm a lone bo-weavil, been out a great long time
I'm gonna sing these blues to ease the bo-weavil's lonesome mind

I don't want no man to put no sugar in my tea

I don't want no man to put no sugar in my tea
Some of them's so evil, I'm afraid they might poison me

I went downtown and bought me a hat

I brought it back home, I laid it on the shelf
Looked at my bed, I'm getting tired

of sleeping by myself

A-lookin' for a home,
Jes a-lookin' for a home.

De nex' time I saw him,
He was runnin' a spinnin' wheel;
De nex' time I saw him,
He was ridin' in an automobile,
A-lookin' for a home,
Jes a-lookin' for a home.

De fus' time I saw de Boll Weevil
He wuz settin' on de square,
De nex' time I saw de Boll Weevil
He had all his family dere—
Dey's lookin' for a home,
Jes a-lookin' for a home.

Then the farmer got angry,
Sent him up in a balloon;
"Good-by, Mr. Farmer;
I'll see you again next June.
A-looking for a home,
Jes a-looking for a home."

Den de Farmer took de Boll Weevil
An' lef' him on the ice;
Says the Boll Weevil to de farmer,
"Dis is mighty cool and nice.
Oh, it is my home,
It is my home."

[…]

De Merchant got half the cotton,

De Boll Weevil got de res';

Didn't leave de nigger's wife

But one old cotton dress.

And it's full of holes,

Oh, it's full of holes.

Ef anybody axes you

Who wuz it writ dis song,

Tell 'em 'twuz a dark-skinned nigger

Wid a pair o' blue duckins on,

A-lookin' for a home,

Jes a-lookin' for a home.

The Ballad of Barbara Allen

This is one of the most ancient ballads brought from the British Isles to the New World. There are probably hundreds different versions of this ballad, which are called in different ways: Barbara Allen, Barbry Ellen, Bobby Allen to name a few. The first account on the existence of this song traces back to 1666, when Samuel Peyps, an English naval official, wrote in his diary: "In perfect pleasure I was to hear her [Mrs. Knipp the actress] sing, and especially her little folk song of 'Barbary Allen'"[82]

This ballad is the story of a young man named William (and in some cases John Graeme) who fells in love for Barbara Allen. She is not able to recognize his love because, one night in a tavern the tosses with every girl in the room except Barbara Allen. His gesture is dictated by his shyness and not by disinterest in her, but Barbara Allen misinterprets this sign, and goes away slighted. One day, William's servant is sent by his master to see the girl while he is in his deathbed. William hopes to see Barbara Allen and to declare his love to her before dying. As

[82] Samuel Peyps as cited by John Jacob Niles in: *The Ballad Book of John Jacob Niles*, University Press of Kentucky, pag 202

soon as she leaves to see him, she hears the town bells ringing and she immediately understands that William is already dead. At this point, she realizes how much she loves him and decides to kill herself. In some versions, for example the first one reported here, the two bodies are eventually buried one next to the other. From the graveyard two flower-plants sprouts, a red rose and a green briar. As they grow, they wrap around each other, as to symbolize that even though they were separated in life, they found union after their death.

This is basically the general outline followed by the majority of the different versions of this ballad. Despite this fact, we often encounter different variations. In many cases for example, the middle part, which corresponds to the eighth stanza of the Ritchie's version is left out. Since this part is commonly sung in the United States (especially in the Appalachia Region), one wonders if it has been added to the song after its arrival in the New World.

The end of the song is kept unmodified in the majority of the times. This romantic ending, in which the two lovers' love expresses itself in the afterlife, is a common expedience often used in classic ballads. Despite this fact, it does not lose its suggestiveness, so much so that, more than 300 years after the first version was sung, Barbara Allen became a hit when recorded by Joan Baez in 1963. One of the central themes of this ballad is death. Death was one of the most recurrent elements both in medieval English ballads and in nineteenth century southeastern ballads. Death is often seen as a possibility to remedy or conclude actions that the protagonists drag on to their afterlife. So that a ghost can come back to tell his or her lover not to marry or, such as in this case, problems and misunderstanding are solved after the death of the main characters.

The first one here reported was taken from Jean Ritchie's: *Folk Songs of the Southern Appalachians.* As she states in her book: "The Ritchie version of the song 'everybody knows' is our family adaptation of the tune and the text that is found in this part of Knott County, Kentucky wherein my father, Balis Ritchie, was born and raised, and where the first twelve of us were born. We knew at least three other tunes in the family, but this one is my own favorite." (73) The other version is older. It was taken from the Child collection, and it is commonly referred to as the Child Ballad number 84. Child and his students collected different versions of it. To every different version corresponds a different letter, the one here took into consideration is referred to as "Bonny Barbara Allen" (84A). The reason why this version is particularly interesting is because it was found in England and not in the United States, so that

the comparison with the other results particularly effective. The ending is very peculiar, because it does not report the burial of the two corpses. This is due to the fact that there are many regional variant, and everyone has little differences.

Barbry Ellen

All in the merry month of May,
When the green buds they were swell in',
Young William Green on his death bed lay,
For the love of Barbry Ellen.

He sent his servant to the town
To the place where she was dwellin'
Sayin', Mister's sick and sends for you
If your name be Barbry Ellen

So slow-lie, slow-lie she got up
And slow-lie she came a-nigh him
And all she said when she got there
Young man, I believe you're dyin'.

Oh, yes, I'm low, I.m very low,
And death is on me dwellin',
No better, no better I'll never be
If I can't get Barbry Ellen.
[…]
For don't you remember in yonder's town
In yonder's town a-drinkin',
You passed your glass all around and around
And you slighted Barbry Ellen.

Oh yes I remember in yonder's town
In yonder's town a-drinkin'
I gave my health to the ladies all around

Bonny Barbara Allen

It was in and about the Martinmas time,
When the green leaves were a falling,
That Sir John Graeme, in the West Country,
Fell in love with Barbara Allan.

He sent his men down through the town,
To the place where she was dwelling:
'O haste and come to my master dear,
Gin ye be Barbara Allan.'

O hooly, hooly rose she up,
To the place where he was lying,
And when she drew the curtain by,
'Young man, I think you're dying.'

And when she drew the curtain by,
'Young man, I think you're dying.'
'O it's I'm sick, and very, very sick,
And 'tis a' for Barbara Allan:'

'O the better for me ye's never be,
Tho your heart's blood were a spilling.
'O dinna ye mind, young man,' said she,
'When ye was in the tavern a drinking,
That ye made the healths gae round and round,
And slighted Barbara Allan?'

But my eart to Barbry Ellen.

He turned his pale face to the wall
For death was on him dwellin'
Adieu, adieu, you good neighbors all
Adieu, sweet Barbry Ellen.

As she as goin' across the fields
She heard those death bells a-kneelin'
And every stroke the death bell give
Hard heatred Barbry Ellen.

Oh mother, oh mother, go make my bed,
Go make it both long and narrow,
Young William died for me today
And I'll die for him tomorrow.

Oh she was buried 'neath the old church tower
And he was buried a-nigh her
And out of his bosom grew a red, red rose,
Out of Barbry's grew a green briar.

They grew and they grew up the old church tower,
Until they could grow no higher
They locked and tied in a true lover's knot,
Red rose wrapped around the green briar.

He turnd his face unto the wall,
And death was with him dealing:
'Adieu, adieu, my dear friends all,
And death was with him dealing:
'Adieu, adieu, my dear friends all,
And be kind to Barbara Allan.'

And slowly, slowly raise she up,
And slowly, slowly left him,
And sighing said, she could not stay,
Since death of life had reft him.

She had not gane a mile but twa,
When she heard the dead-bell ringing,
And every jow that the dead-bell geid,
It cry'd, Woe to Barbara Allan!

'O mother, mother, make my bed!
O make it saft and narrow!
Since my love died for me to-day,
I'll die for him to-morrow.'

Wreck of the Old '97

This is one of the most popular songs written in the Southeast. It narrates the tragedy of a train crash that happened in 1903, widely known with the name of "Wreck of the Old 97". The Old 97 was a train that ran from 1902 to 1907 between Washington and Atlanta. "On Sunday, September

27, 1903, because of various delays, ‘Old 97’ reached Monroe, Virginia, 165 miles south of Washington, about an hour late. At that station the crew was danged, and the engineer who took command was Joseph A. Broady, nicknamed ‘Steve’ after the vaunted Daredevil Steve Brodie who leaped from the Brooklyn Bridge on a bet in 1886 and lived to collect. Broady, who had come to the Southern Railway only a month earlier from the Norfolk and Western, was unfamiliar with the route of Old 97 and highballed it southward trying to make up some of the lost time. Near Danville, Virginia, was Stillhouse Trestle, a wooden bridge spanning Cherrystone Creek seventy-five feet below. The trestle was preceded by a curve and a descending grade, a combination that made it a danger point.”(Cohen 12) That is how on the morning of September 27, the Old 97 passing on this curve in Virginia crashed, and eleven of the seventeen people on the train died, while the other six were injured.

This ballad was written in the same year of the accident, and it soon became popular all over the United States. Since different people claimed the authorship of this song, we are not sure about who actually wrote it. Despite this fact, the history of this song began long before 1903. As a matter of fact, it was composed on the theme of another song written in 1865 by Henry Clay Work, called “The Ship That Never Returned”. In this text both versions are reported below for comparison. Both songs were written following the “work song canon”, where a work event is narrated. The second one is an evolution of the first one. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, it was quite common in the United States to take recent and famous events as a source of inspiration, and turn them into songs. Behind every song there was a second meaning, where the event narrated was usually read in a different prospective. The song about the Titanic is a good example. In the story narrated the Titanic is seen as the boat of unequal opportunities, where only wealthy people have the right to survive.

The two songs here taken into consideration may diverge a little bit, but the message is pretty much the same in both of them. Very naively, the Wreck of the Old 97 states clearly that we have to consider carefully every action we make, before we regret it. Nevertheless, behind this simple conclusion hides another interpretation of this song, which is, once again, the defeat and the exploitation of the working class, in this case the workers in the train, by the managerial class that gives orders without taking any risks. The message of the song is basically that the accident would not have occurred if Broady did not received the order of speeding to get to Virginia on time.

There are different versions of this songs, which have been covered multiple times by different authors such as Pink Anderson, Woody Guthrie, Lonnie Donegan and Pete Seeger, just to name a few. The version here reported was taken from Norm Cohen's *Robert W. Gordon and the Second Wreck of "Old 97"*.

The Wrek of the Old 97

Well they gave him his orders at Monroe Virginia
sayin' "Steve you're way behind time,
this is not 38, it's old 97
You must put her into Spencer on time."

Then he turned around and said to his black greasy fireman
shovel on a little more coal
And when we cross that White Oak Mountain
watch old 97 roll

But it's a mighty rough road from Lynchburg to Danville
And from Lima it's on a three mile grade
It was on that grade that he lost his air brakes
see what a jump he made

He was goin' down the grade makin' 90 miles an hour
When his whistle broke into a scream

He was found in the wreck with his hand on the throttle
A scalded to death by the steam

Then the telegram come to Washington station

The Ship that never Returned

On a summer day, as the waves were rippling
By the soft and gentle breeze
Did a ship set sail with her cargo laden
For a port beyond the seas. Did she ever return?
No she never returned

And her fate was yet unlearned
Tho' for years and years there were fond ones waiting
For the ship that never returned.

Said a feeble lad to his anxious mother,
"I must cross the wide, wide sea,
For they say, perchance, in a foreign climate
There is health and strength for me!"

'Twas a gleam of hope in a maze of danger
And her heart for her youngest yearned;
Though she sent him forth with a smile and a blessing
On the ship that never returned.

"Only one more trip," said a gallant captain,
As he kissed his weeping wife.
"Only one more bag of the golden treasure,
And 'twill last us all through life.

and this is how it read

Oh that brave engineer that run old 97

he's a layin' in old Danville dead.

So now all you ladies you better take a warnin'

from this time on and learn

Never speak harsh words to your true lovin' husband

He may leave you and never return.

Then we'll spend our days in a cozy cottage

And enjoy the rest I've earned."

But, alas, poor man, who sailed commander

On the ship that never returned.

The Coo Coo Bird

The Coo Coo Bird, or The Cuckoo is an Appalachian song, which even if it does not have a narrative pattern, like common ballads have, it is able to convey a precise message. Its origins are lost, but probably this is a song that originated in the British Isle, and was brought into the Southeast by the first immigrants coming from there. The two variants here reported are very interesting. The first one on the left, is the one sung by Clarence Ashley, it was recorded in 1927 and then included in *The Anthology of American Folk Music* by Henry Smith. The second one is a version sung by Jean Ritchie, it was handed over for generations in her family. The musician later transcribed it in 1955.

The two versions are based on the same theme, but they differ in many characteristics. First of all, the two perspectives are completely different. The reason why it is so interesting to analyze them together is because Ashley sings from a male perspective, while Ritchie from a female one. So that the bird acquires a different connotation in the two songs. The element that does not change is the gender of the cuckoo, which is a female in both cases.

The figure of the cuckoo can be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, it is a symbol of adultery. This representation may be due to the fact that the female birds of this specie lay their eggs in the nest of other birds, and leave. This is the interpretation of the cuckoo that survived among women in the Appalachia region, and here it figures in the second example. On the other hand, the cuckoo represents the liberation of instincts, because this bird starts singing in spring. Here it is connected with drinking and gambling. The interesting thing is that in Ashley's version

the bird starts singing on the 4th of July. This may be another confirmation of what stated above: the cuckoo brings liberty and freedom. Despite this fact, in the first version it is not a completely positive figure. The cuckoo is "a pretty bird/ She sings and she flies", but the person who gets stuck in "her" charm is likely to lose everything he has.

This song is sung and played in different ways and with different instrumentations. Sometimes, in the old Appalachian ballad tradition is not even musically accompanied but sung *a cappella*, most of the time by female singers. The version recorded by Ashley in 1927 is composed by voice and banjo. The way this five-string banjo is played in this song is very peculiar. The African influence is traceable in the rhythm, while the notes almost resemble an oriental type of scale.

Jean Ritchie recorded this song in a very different way. In some ways, her version is more classic, she sings and plays the Appalachian dulcimer. This is what she says in the introduction of her version: "My family has always known this song, it seems. It is fairly similar to the variants found in and around Hindman in Knott County, where my father's folks lived. It is one of the saddest and loveliest songs I know." (14)

The Coo-Coo Bird

Gonna build me log cabin
On a mountain so high
So I can see Willie
As he goes a-passing by.

Oh, the coo-coo, he's a pretty bird,
She wobbles as she flies
She never hollers coo-coo
Till the fourth day July.

I've played cards in England
I've played cards in Spain
I'll bet you ten dollars
I beat you next game.

Jack-a-Diamonds, Jack-a-Diamonds
I've known you from old

The Cuckoo Bird

Oh the cuckoo, she's a pretty bird,
She sings and she flies,
She brings us glad tidings,
And she tells us no lies

She sucks all pretty flowers
To make her voice clear,
And she never sings "cuckoo"
Till the spring of the year.

Come all you young women,
Take warning by me;
Never place your affection
On the love of a man.

You've robbed my poor pocket
Of my silver and my gold.

My horses ain't hungry
They won't eat your hay
I'll drive on a little further
I'll feed 'em on my way.

For the roots they will wither,
Ther branches decay,
He'll turn his back on you
And walk square away
If you don't forsake me
I'll not be forsworne,
And they'll all be mistaken
If they think that I'll mourn,
For I'll get myself up in
Some higher degree
And I'll walk as light by him
As he can be me

Conclusion

The emergence of folk music in the Southeast was a long process to which we cannot attribute a precise date, because it generated from the musical customs immigrants had in their motherland, and it then developed in the New World. The aim of this research was actually not to determine the exact period of time when this music generated, but to establish on what extent the different cultures that met in the Southeast influenced each other in the creation of it.

People coming from the Caribbean, France, Germany and Italy contributed in various ways to the creation of folk music, both instrumentally, for example with the introduction of the Italian mandolin, and stylistically, with the employment of new singing techniques such as the Alpine yodeling. Despite this fact, the two major influences remain the West African and the one coming from the British Isles. American folk music would not have existed without African rhythms and stylistic patterns such as *shouts* and *call and response.* Traditional ballads brought into the Southeast by British settlers, have been peculiar to the same extent, providing a music standard, which was later employed by the majority of musicians with different cultural backgrounds. This is an example of how music overcame racial barriers and distinctions of any kind.

The question that I kept in mind during the whole course of this research has been whether music promoted a resolution of social issues, such as discrimination and segregation in the Southeast, through the sharing of different music heritages, or whether it did not. As Bill Monroe stated in different interviews, the creation of *blue grass* music in Kentucky was highly determined by influences coming from the African tradition, that white musicians learnt observing their black neighbors. If we listen to some old recording from the Appalachian Mountains, sometimes it result very hard to determine whether what we are listening comes from black o white musicians. This is why, at least at first sight, I naively imagined that within the music world, the word "segregation" was rare to encounter. But this, unfortunately, is not completely true. Music has some undeniable merits. The spiritual, for example, surely had an important role in the movement that led to civil rights. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the mixing of styles coming from different traditions always happened in a friendly environment, away from prejudices. On the contrary, this "borrowing" often took place simply because the two communities lived very close to each other, so that the music contamination between the two was inevitable.

As John Shelton Reed expresses it: "From the start the South has been the home of peoples whose intertwined cultures have set them off from other Americans. And where the economic and political story has been largely one of conflict, division, and separation, the tale of the cultural South is one of blending, sharing, mutual influence—and of continuing unity and distinctiveness." (149) Music as a cultural form is an inevitable process of creolization. The role it assumed during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century was quite controversial. As a matter of fact, if on the one it promoted sharing and encouraged a positive comparison between different cultures, on the other hand, music has always been something running by itself. Many white musicians learnt music from their black neighbors, but this did not stop them from singing songs such as "Flat Footed Nigger"or other raciest songs. This thing is a prove that, even if it may sounds disappointing, music did not really affect social relations in the Southeast. Rather than promoting integration, it took a life of its own, distant, or better, detached from social issues.

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Appendix #1

Worship with God: A Comparison of Two Religion Experiences

The two interviews that follow are meant as a comparison between two sacred-music living traditions in Atlanta: the Sacred Harp and the Gospel. The reason why it is so interesting to compare these two experiences is because the two people interviewed come from a different background and, even though they both belong to a congregation that make use of music as a religious means, their experience is slightly different. This fact is determined by their difference in age, and most of all, by the fact that the fist tradition taken into consideration is mostly black oriented, while the second one is mostly associated with the white community. The first interview was recorded with Sam Collier, 29 years old and minister and director of the Youth Choir at Ebenezer[83] in Atlanta by Giorgio Grasso, an anthropology student at Ca' Foscari University. The interview took place on February 26th, 2012, in the park outside Ebenezer. The second person interviewed is Malinda Snow, 67 years old, and professor in the English department at Georgia State University in Atlanta. This is a written interview based on an exchange of e-mails between Dr. Snow and me during the month of May 2012.

INTERVIEW #1 – Sam Collier

GIORGIO – What's your relation with this congregation over the all?

SAM – I was here once and this is my first day back, and I was probably here for about a year and a half, directing the youth choir, and, so, I guess I function more as a worship leader, at times, to lead the congregation through song, into worship with God, uhmm, and I also direct the young people, so, the younger, maybe the young adults, kinda of, uh, high school students as well, college high school, just in choir just in music.

G – Were you part of Ebenezer Baptist Church congregation before working as a director as well?

S – No, actually I, they brought me on as director, then I became a member.

G – Then, moving toward a more general perspective, what's your perception of the service, like, the structure of the service you attend, and how much do you think it relies on each of the parts that make it, the preacher, the choir and the congregation?

S – Uhmm. There's a couple of different ways to look at it, because I've been, I've been... In the African-American... The African-American churches is a lot different than caucasian church, uhmm, it's just the way that we do things. We have a more charismatic style. Uhmm, it's just that as a race we identify more emotionally, we are extroverse, so to speak, I would say for the majority of parts.

[83] The church of Martin Luther King

We feel a certain way we are gonna let it be known. And so, a lot of time I think the whole purpose of the environment is, uhmm, I would like to say it like this: sometimes the church could be considered a hospital, a hospital for the sick in spirit; and so people come to church looking to be healed, looking to feel better, looking, you know, just as a hospital would do; and so you have so many different people that are in the church, that come pretty much for the same reason we all come. Some of us are already well, you know, but we just, I guess we are coming for our check up, you know what I'm saying? [laughs] My check up, you know, how am I doing, you know, because since we are imperfect beings, in itself there is always something to check up on. There is always an area in ourselves that needs to be get better. So, with that being the overall consensus about why our people, as a race or just as people, come to church, and why church is needed, because is not really an hospital for the spirit, you know. The church would be that to me. Your internal, how do you deal with your internal, how do you deal with your internal and how do you fix what's going on inside, without a counselor, you know what I'm saying? You come in the church and we heal each other, so I think the relationship between the congregation, the music and the pastor... You know, I've been in a lot of different church environments, even over at New Birth, to here, Ebenezer. My daddy's where I grew up, my dad is a pastor. And so, I'm a minister as well, I got ordained, or licensed, back in June over at New Birth, uhmm, to just preach the Gospel and some other things, and also lead. I would say the pastor is the visionary, he's the responsible for the overall healing process of the congregation, you know what I mean? He sets the tone, so we say, ok, listen, he would be equivalent to the doctor, the musician would be equivalent to the nurse, you know what I mean? So we see you first, you come in and we say ok, let me get you ready for the doctor, you know, and so we sing some songs, we open up your spirit, we build trust, we, uh, just kind of get you comfortable with where you are, then the doctor comes in and says “Are you ready?”, you know what I mean? And then from there... I mean, it is so funny that we are using that analogy because, uhmm, the way the church is run is very much like a visit at the doc.

G – It's an interesting analogy actually; you were saying singing, so, how much of what you are describing actually relies on the music?

S – Well, music I think is a universal language, you know, and I think that... Well, I do not wanna get too spiritual, but, well, I just say it like this. I think overall, when helping people, or tying to teach people, trying to help people heal themselves, or just trying to help people in general, the number one factor when you're trying to do something to push somebody into another place, a better place, trust is the biggest thing, trust. If I don't trust you I'm not gonna open my heart to you, I'm not gonna listen to you, I'm not gonna receive. You know, is the equivalent to why our parents fight on our life because we trust them, like, we grew up with them, you know that mum tells me something, I'm gonna listen to mum, you know what I'm saying? I'm gonna listen to mum before... So, a stranger, so with everything before we, before you do surgery, so like... I want him to trust me, you know, we have, they have to, the people have to trust them before they let them open them up, and, I would say that music, is a... Helps to build trust, if not everything, because music is something everybody can agree on. If it sounds good, we all agree, you know, and if we feel that feeling of “You know what? I now what that is,” that's music, and that sounds good, that feels good, and even I don't necessarily know what I'm at, I feel I'm in the right place because I'm

familiar with that. And music is a universal language, music in itself can be healing, it can sets moods, and so that's very important, that's why we start very happy and joyful because we wanna remind you that this is the day the Lord has made, or this is a new day for you, it doesn't have to be like your yesterday, it's a new day, and so that's why most of the songs at the top of the service are very [he starts to sing and clap hands] "Uh, uh, uh, clap your hands, come on clap your hands," [he goes back to a speaking stance] we want you to feel joy, we want you to feel better, and that's why getting closer to the word it gets a little slower, because we're about, we're getting ready to dive into you, dive into your psyche and dive into your heart, and begin to ask you some questions that you may not wanna be asked, but if we ask them we know that we can help you. The entire process and experience... The musicians is probably the second highest paid person in the church, after the pastor.

G – You mean the musicians that play the instruments, like the organ, piano, the drum and so on?

S – Yeah, and also the singers, the worship leaders. Usually there's one worship leader, and then the rest of the people. But most of them volunteer, but they hire probably somebody to be the worship leader which is key, all worship leader [he is distracted by a passing woman, with who he exchanges greetings before coming back to me]. So, uh, key, you know, that is usually the highest paid people in the organization is gonna be your pastor and the musicians, your Worship and Arts director, because they go hand in hand. That's your foundation of any church.

G – So also in terms of economical planning for the church is very important to think about this.

S – Oh yeah. I mean, everything is, you know, you probably have hired musicians before you hire a secretary. Because is like, "I got the pastor, ok, now I got the Word... I need the musicians." Because, I mean, I need somebody to open it up. And even if you look in war time, any time before they went into a war, they always sound the trumpet. Music always goes first. Because it's the front runner, that's why the musicians are so important.

G – Kind of the same spirit of the second line, then...

S – Yeah, yeah.

G – That's interesting. Now moving somewhere else, I was wondering how much attendance of service contributes to the definition of your identity, as an individual, as you Sam? Your perception of yourself, as well.

S – Uhmm, well, I don't know how to answer. Ok, I can answer in a lot of different ways, you ask me some deep questions! Well, everything that I do in my life is rooted, to begin, in the church. Every decision I make, business wise, everything I do relationship wise, my friends, my family, my loved ones, if not romantic interest, everything that I do in terms of my health, everything I do is rooted in the Bible, everything. So, with that, going to church is like...going to the doctor, you know? They're all the same, all the same, except it's just more frequent, you know. Anyway, if I were to leave Atlanta, and go, you know, to England, I would be trying to find a church. It's something to be said about us just...we need one another, so that's one, I mean you can just go

and experience people that love me, I kind of think that's God. When you experience somebody that loves you in the flesh, you understand more of how God loves you.

G – So, you would attend even a different kind of church or service, even if it would be without music? I'm thinking about the example you did of London...

S – Oh, yeah.. But if it had music I'd probably attend it more, but if it was, if I was somewhere, like in Arctica [*sic*], or something, and they just didn't have any music at all, but they had a place where...

[Sam stops and waives his hand to a man who he tells me is the youth pastor of the church]

G – So, you were telling me about your relation with the possibility of attending a different kind of service, or church. You were saying that you would immediately look for a church, and you would prefer having music in it, even though if there wouldn't be any, it would still be fine.

S – Yeah, and if I couldn't find one, I would just do it online.

G – You would do it online?

S – Yeah, there's a lot of online churches.

G – Could you tell me more about this?

S – Yeah, well, there's a lot of online campuses that you can YouTube. I'll give you a website of one of the largest online churches right now. It is www.lifechurch.tv I believe. That's the biggest online church that exist.

G – And you would make use of it.

S – Yeah, I would do it; I would want to go and experience it and get to feel it, you know, but, you know, the philosophy of Christ and everything he was about, everything the bible speaks about, you know, even if it's three people around me, or even if it's just me, I'm so dedicated to the mission, that even if every church would go down I would still be dedicated to it. And so, I'm going in on, so, you know, the church doesn't make me, 'cause I've been through so much, that, uhmm, with churches... Because, the thing is that people are flawed, everybody is flawed, but God isn't. He is never flawed, and a lot of time we can get in church environment, and if we base it off of the people, or the minister, or the musicians, then we can risk losing our salvation because people are flawed, people can make mistakes. So you have to care more about a perfect God than an imperfect man.

G – So the mission comes before the man?

S – Oh, yeah, the mission, period. But we go to church to try to get everybody, you know what I mean? [he laughs]

G – ...going back to the hospital analogy you were making.

S – Yes [he laughs and accentuates the confirmation]

G – Now, very straightforward, how much do you think that attendance of musical services contributes to the definition of an African-American identity?

S – A lot, I mean, the simple answer is just, a lot, you know, uhmm. I think it goes back to slavery in the United States, uhmm, a lot of time the music was a way of communicating when we couldn't talk, we were in bondage. And so music for us is very healing, when, when we can't sometimes. And sometimes as a race you go through some... You...I think our race, just in general, is still dealing with a lot of pain for four hundred years of slavery, period. And it's been a long time since then, but and then racism, of course, and the Civil Rights Movement was only forty years ago, and so, with that, you know what I mean? With that we experience a lot of different issues in our community rather than other communities, uhmm, not... I wouldn't say that we're the only one experiencing but rather than the caucasian community we experienced a lot more, and so there's an internal battle, and a very deep, deep pain that it is still within us at times that we have to overcome. And mu... and sometimes nobody can talk that out of you, sometimes you just have to be... you have to let the music just heal you, sometimes the music, sometimes the sound of the piano or the thump in the base drum or the guitar is... explains your emotions just enough, you know what I mean?!

INTERVIEW #2- Malinda Snow

Anna-At what age did you begin singing in the Sacred Harp? Where?

Dr. Snow-I began singing at about age 45 (I'm 67 now). I had known about Sacred Harp singing for many years but hadn't quite known how to get connected with it. I went to a singing school taught by Richard DeLong at Emory Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, and there I bought my copy of *The Sacred Harp 1991*. After that I was able to find singings and connect with singers. (The internet helped.)

I first heard about Sacred Harp singing back in the early seventies, when I heard singing recordings played on a radio program. I found the music so appealing that I wanted to learn more, and I started reading.

A-Did your family sing before you started?

S-Neither my parents nor my grandparents had sung. I have later found out that some great-grandparents did. My mother remembered knowing people who sang, but she really didn't know anything about Sacred Harp singing until I began to get interested in it.

A-Do you think the Sacred Harp tradition is losing popularity among young generations? Why?

S-Well, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, people of all ages had fewer opportunities to listen to music than they do now. Recording and broadcast media allow people to listen to music easily now, and young people seem (always have seemed, I suppose) to enjoy their own sorts of music. But we have lots of young adults and youth who want to learn and who participate in singings. We also use activities like Camp FASOLA to teach people of all ages to sing. Singing Sacred Harp is not easy; making music is not easy. Listening is easier than making music, and some people will always take the easier choice. Even so, many people, young and old, are willing to work at the task of making music together.

A-Did you ever write a Sacred Harp hymn?

S-No.

A-Why are the majority of the Sacred Harp singers white?

S-Sacred Harp singing was once popular among black singers in the South. I sing with a man whose great-grandfather was a slave who learned the style from his white owners and taught his own family to sing Sacred Harp. But in the South, where Sacred Harp survived most vigorously, the religious communities of white and black people were segregated, and they tended to go their separate ways. Gospel music and later styles of sacred music came into popularity in the early twentieth century, and they influenced both white and black singers, but they seemed to have particularly appealed to black singers, and so black singers who might have once sung Sacred Harp began singing Gospel instead. The Sacred Harp tradition was broken for most black singers, though we do have some who want to learn (or re-learn) it.

A-According to your opinion, what is the element that renders the Sacred Harp so unique and that kept this tradition alive while other sacred music disappeared?

S-The book, I think, forms a strong basis for the tradition. Even though various editions have appeared, the core of *The Sacred Harp* is a set of really quite magnificent hymn texts, most of which date from the eighteenth century. With those texts we have a dynamic collection of tunes, some of which are quite old, but others of which are new. The combination of older texts and a growing, evolving set of tunes works to provide both tradition and innovation.

Moreover, the discipline of Sacred Harp singing is both difficult and satisfying. The sound resembles nothing outside itself. Nothing else sounds like Sacred Harp singing, and beside it, much choral music sounds insipid or pretentious.

In addition, a Sacred Harp singing provides a wonderful occasion to work together with others to create music and to share a meal. These are essentially sacramental activities. They lead to

community-building and they strengthen friendships. Over the years, the Sacred Harp community has become a welcoming, sustaining, nonjudgmental institution. Unlike specific churches, it has no doctrine, no teachings that one must adhere to. All are welcome and nobody is ostracized.

What emerges from these two interviews is that even though the purpose of sacred singing is very similar in both communities, (music is in both cases a spiritual means to get in contact with God) the approach to it is very different.

From the beginning it is clear that the main reason that renders these two traditions different one from the other is a racial problem. As Melinda Snow clearly explains, during slavery, and later with racial laws in the South, the two communities that once influenced each other, took a life of their own.

The reason why this comparison is particularly interesting is because both Collier and Snow live in Atlanta. We have to consider that this city has a long history as far as racial problems and civil rights are concerned. Until the 1950s this place was dominated by racial disparities. Everything was segregated, churches included. During the 1950s something began to change. The movement that later led to civil rights started exactly in the Ebanizer district, and the church was the center of it. By the time things changed, and black people finally achieved the same possibilities, the two traditions were already far apart. In conclusion we can say that the black and the white communities intermingled and influenced each other in a time in which, even if the situation was not an equal one, the two groups lived close and could share their different music background. During the eighteenth century the division between blacks and whites got stronger, and this is the main reason why the two traditions keep a different and distinctive connotation, that clearly distinguish one from the other.

Appendix #2

A Chronology of Folk Events in the Southeast

1619: The first ship full of African slaves is sold to colonists in Virginia. Field-holler singing eventually develops. Throughout the following centuries, African work songs, call-and-response patterns, oral tradition, religious beliefs and practices, and rhythms intermingle with European tradition and white American music forms, establishing the bases for the creation of folk music.

1638 Colonial communities begin to convert African-born slaves to Christianity.

1650 Work songs, spirituals, and jubilee songs, as well as clapping and the playing of homemade instruments, become common on southern plantations.

1734 The Great Awakening, a series of religious revivals break into the American colonies, revolutionizes religion in the South, and more slaves are converted to Christianity. At the end of the century, the second Awakening takes place.

1736 In Hanover County, Virginia, the first American fiddling contest is organized.

1801 After years of unfair treatment in white churches, African-Americans begin a movement that will lead to separate congregations. Richard Allen publishes a collection of hymns for use in all black congregations only.

1830 Virginia native Joel Sweeney copyrights the five-string banjo

1833Christian Friederich Martin builds the first American-made acoustic guitar

1839 Swiss singing group the Tyrolese Rainer Family tours the United States. Their Alpine Harmonies and yodeling inspire the formation of similar bands, and a new way of singing is introduced in the Southeast.

1843The first acknowledged minstrel show is performed by the white Virginia Minstrels in blackface. Folk music is moving its first steps.

1870s After the end of the Civil War, segregation is enforced in the Southeast.

1871 The Fisk Jubilee Singers tour for the first time, collecting funds for Fisk University and spreading the interest for black music throughout the United States.

1877 Thomas Edison files patents on the cylinder-playing phonograph

1882 Harvard professor Francis James Child publishes the first volume of his masterwork, “The English and Scottish Popular Ballads”, which will inspire American folksongs collectors to identify “Child Ballads” in different part of the Southeast over the next decades.

1887 Emile Berliner, who had earlier invented the microphone, invents the first gramophone, a basic record player with an acoustic horn

1903 On September 27, a mail train on the Southern Railroad crashes, killing several people. The event becomes the subject of Vernon Dalhart’s 1924 single “The Wreck of the Old ‘97”, one of the most popular protest songs of all times.

1919 The Gibson Company markets a new, easy-to-hold mandolin, which sells extremely well in rural America

1920 Mamie Smith lrecords Crazy Blues, the first blues recording by a black singer, for Okeh Records. The phonograph replaces sheet music.

1922 On March 16, Atlanta’s radio WSB makes its on-air debut.

1923 Fiddlin’ John Carson composes “The Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane”, which is arguably the first-ever country record. Ma Rainey records “Bo-Weavil Blues” for Paramount, and a wave of southern female blues singers, including Bessie Smith, enter the studio

1928 The Library of Congress’s Music division creates the Archive of American Folk Song. Bascom Lamar Lunsford establishes the first Mountain dance and Folk Festival in Asheville, North Carolina.

1933 John and Alan Lomax, begin their music research in the South to make folkfield recordings.

1934 John and Alan Lomax publish “American Ballads and Folksongs”

1935 Alan Lomax organizes a field expedition to Georgia, Florida and the Bahamas with Zola Neale Hurston and Mary Elizabeth Barniele.

The Origins in Pictures

Henry Ossawa Turner, The Banjo Lesson, 1893

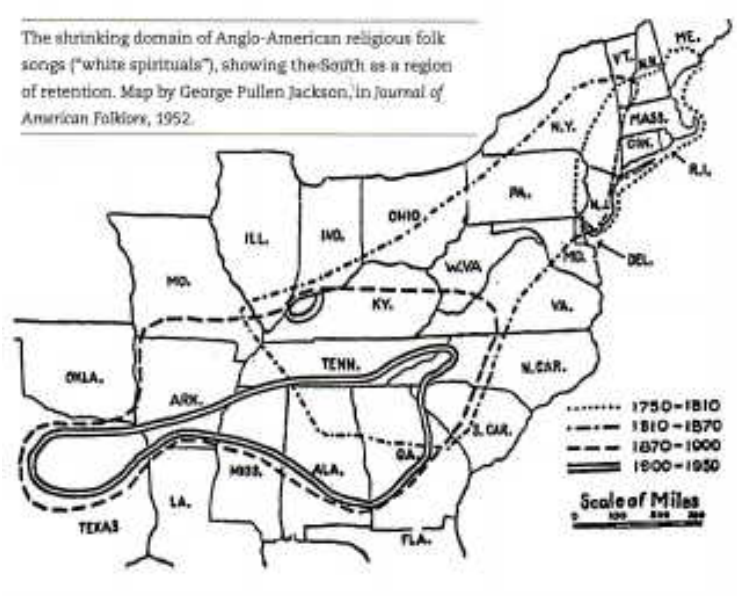
Banjo, fiddle and dulcimer, Shaping Traditions Collection, Atlanta History Center

Elizabeth Cotten, 1958

Skillet-Lickers, ca 1920s

Black Cake-Walk, Illustration, 1903

White Cake-Walk, Illustration, 1903



Map of White Spirituals, 1952

Palatka Jug Band, Florida, 1905

The Auditorium-Aromny, 1909. The auditorium was the scene of theOld Fiddlers' Convention

The Auditorium-Armony, 1909

The fiddle and guitar craze is sweeping northward!

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Wild Bill Jones. Banjo. Vocal Chorus. *Eva Davis.* 129 D

Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane. Solo with Fiddle and Guitar.
Rock A-Bye Baby in Dixie. Yodel with Guitar. *Riley Puckett.* 127 D

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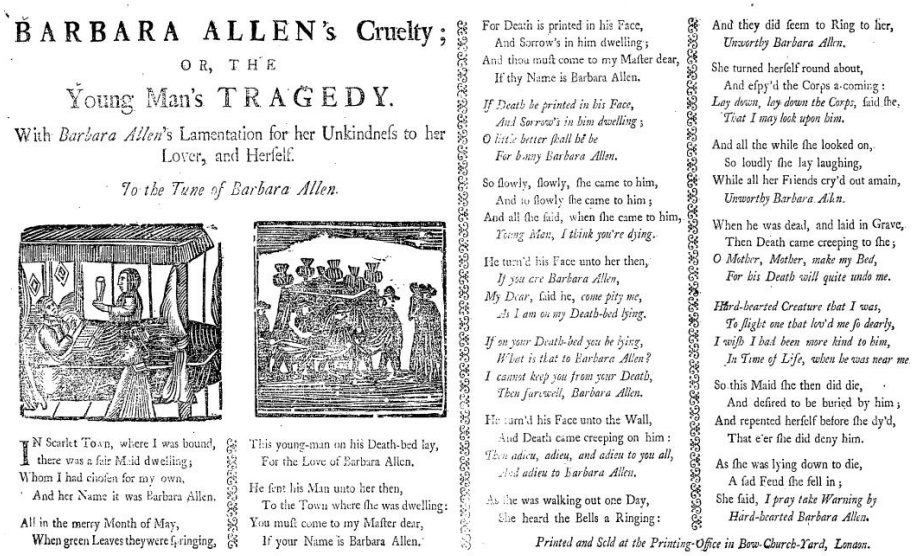
The Talking Machine World, 1924

Ring Shout, McInosh County, Georgia, 1981

Appalachian Storyteller Ray Hicks, Beech Mountain, Nort Carolina, 2000

Fiddlin' John Carson, 1920s

Lynching of Leo Frank in Marietta, Georgia, 1915, New Georgia Encyclopedia



BARBARA ALLEN's Cruelty;

OR, THE

Young Man's TRAGEDY.

With *Barbara Allen*'s Lamentation for her Unkindneſs to her Lover, and Herſelf.

To the Tune of Barbara Allen.

IN Scarlet Town, where I was bound,
there was a fair Maid dwelling;
Whom I had chuſen for my own,
And her Name it was Barbara Allen.

All in the merry Month of May,
When green Leaves they were ſpringing,
This young-man on his Death-bed lay,
For the Love of Barbara Allen.

He ſent his Man unto her then,
To the Town where ſhe was dwelling:
You muſt come to my Maſter dear,
If your Name is Barbara Allen.

For Death is printed in his Face,
And Sorrow's in him dwelling;
And thou muſt come to my Maſter dear,
If thy Name is Barbara Allen.

If Death be printed in his Face,
And Sorrow's in him dwelling;
O little better ſhall he be
For-any Barbara Allen.

So ſlowly, ſlowly, ſhe came to him,
And ſo ſlowly ſhe came to him;
And all ſhe ſaid, when ſhe came to him,
Young Man, I think you're dying.

He turn'd his Face unto her then,
If you are Barbara Allen,
My Dear, ſaid he, *come pity me,*
As I am on my Death-bed lying.

If on your Death-bed you be lying,
What is that to Barbara Allen?
I cannot keep you from your Death,
Then farewell, Barbara Allen.

He turn'd his Face unto the Wall,
And Death came creeping on him:
Then adieu, adieu, and adieu to you all,
And adieu to Barbara Allen.

As ſhe was walking out one Day,
She heard the Bells a Ringing:
And they did ſeem to Ring to her,
Unworthy Barbara Allen.

She turned herſelf round about,
And eſpy'd the Corps a-coming:
Lay down, lay down the Corps, ſaid ſhe,
That I may look upon him.

And all the while ſhe looked on,
So loudly ſhe lay laughing,
While all her Friends cry'd out amain,
Unworthy Barbara Allen.

When he was dead, and laid in Grave,
Then Death came creeping to ſhe;
O Mother, Mother, make my Bed,
For his Death will quite undo me.

Hard-hearted Creature that I was,
To ſlight one that lov'd me ſo dearly,
I wiſh I had been more kind to him,
In Time of Life, when he was near me.

So this Maid ſhe then did die,
And deſired to be buried by him;
And repented herſelf before ſhe dy'd,
That e'er ſhe did deny him.

As ſhe was lying down to die,
A ſad Feud ſhe fell in;
She ſaid, *I pray take Warning by*
Hard-hearted Barbara Allen.

Printed and Sold at the Printing-Office in Bow-Church-Yard, London.

Barbara Allen's Cruelty, London 1760

Ads from *Chicago Defender*, 1924 and 1927