

“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.”

Song of Solomon 2:1 (AKJV)

PROGRAM NOTES

He's the Lily of the Valley is one of my Papa's favorite African American spirituals. He often sung both variants of this work to me. I was never able to write down my Papa's singing of folk music until I finally mastered melodic and rhythmic dictation at the New England Conservatory. I soon became dedicated to that task. I would return from Boston to Virginia during the summers to write down hundreds of “Papa's tunes,” as I called them. I have published many of them. This title is also a favorite of mine.

My conservatory teachers always told me to try to authenticate many of the tunes I learned from Papa. However, regarding original *primary* sources, the first singers of these tunes (slaves) are long dead and, according to the Library of Congress, field recordings have also been lost. Nevertheless, I went looking for the earliest *secondary* sources I could find.

The earliest secondary source of this title is a solo and piano edition arranged by William Arms Fisher in 1926. It is in a volume titled *Seventy Negro Spirituals* (Oliver Ditson). It is an excellent, but overly lush setting. It is valuable because it gives the first reference to the *three known verses of the text*.

Papa said that he knew of *three* musical variants of this title. He did not like the third one, so he would not sing it to me even after repeated urgings. The first variant is the one he called *the slow, then faster version*. The text may include or leave out the *original* first verse:

*King Jesus in His chariot rides,
With four (six) white horses side by side.*

Of the three most popular modern choral editions of this work, Moses Hogan uses the first variant and the original first verse (Hal Leonard, 2002). Alice Parker also used the first variant and uses the original first verse (Lawson-Gould, 1966). Wendell Whalum uses the music of the first variant, as well. However, textually, he does not use the above first verse (Warner Brothers, 1981). There are major differences in all three of their middle (B) sections.

The present edition is the *second* variant, as my Papa called it. He and I do not use the original first verse. My tempo is not slow, like the first variant, although it is *not too fast* either. The middle (B) section in my second variant is totally unlike that of the middle sections (verses) of the first variant or any of the above-mentioned arrangers. I have grouped the verses and refrains for women's and then men's voices. Next, they are followed by a jubilant affirmation that Jesus is like the Lily of the Valley!

It is interesting to note that the Old Testament's Rose of Sharon is not a rose at all, but a *hibiscus* (*hibiscus syriacus*). It is a many-flowing plant of different species. The real, usually white flower called *Lily of the Valley* is poisonous yet sweetly scented, and it is *extremely* beautiful (*Convallaria majalis*)! It seems doubtless that quality is the real reason that the original anonymous poet selected this lovely imagery to describe Jesus.

Finally, I am still searching for that third variant. So, until I find it, this second one will have to do until a third variant is found. However, keep *singing*, “Oh, my Lord!”

—James McCullough
Cambridge, Massachusetts
2018

TEXT

REFRAIN:

He's the lily of the valley,

Oh, my Lord!

He's the lily of the valley,

Oh, my Lord!

Since Heaven is so high,

And I'm so low:

I wonder if I'll ever see

The Heaven I know.

I've never been to Heaven,

But I've been told:

That the streets up there

Are paved with gold.

REFRAIN:

What kind of shoes

Are those you wear?

That you can walk

Upon the air?

These shoes I wear

Are gospel shoes:

And you can wear some

If you choose.

REFRAIN:

Traditional Text

Song of Solomon 2:1 (AKJV)

James McCullough (b. 1939)

For biographical information visit:
www.ecspublishing.com/composers

For Dr. Allen Hightower
 Professor of Music and Director of Choral Studies,
 and The University of North Texas A Cappella Choir, Denton, Texas,
 and dedicated to the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King (1929–1968)

He's the Lily of the Valley

for SATB Chorus (divisi) unaccompanied

Traditional Text
 Song of Solomon 2:1 (AKJV)

African American Spiritual
 Arranged by James McCullough

Andante moderato ♩ = 76–80 (not too fast)

mp always flowing, with joyous conviction and thanksgiving
 (unis. on repeat)

Soprano

He's the lil - y of the val - ley, Oh, my

Alto

mp always flowing, with joyous conviction and thanksgiving

He's the lil - y of the val - ley, Oh, my

Tenor 1

mp always flowing, with joyous conviction and thanksgiving

He's the lil - y of the val - ley, Oh, my

Tenor 2

always flowing, with joyous conviction and thanksgiving

mf

lil - y of the val - ley, _____

Bass

mp always flowing, with joyous conviction and thanksgiving

He's the lil - y of the val - ley, Oh, my

Keyboard
 (for
 rehearsal
 only)

Andante moderato ♩ = 76–80 (not too fast)

4

mp

Lord! He's the lil - y of the val - ley,

mp

Lord! He's the lil - y of the val - ley,

mp

Lord! He's the lil - y of the val - ley,

mf

He is the lil - y, lil - y of the val - ley.

mp

Lord! He's the lil - y of the val - ley. Keep sing - ing,

mf

1.

(A few selected voices)

2.

Just keep on sing - ing.

He's the

7

f

Oh, my Lord! He's the Oh, my

p

Oh, my Lord! He's the Oh, my

p

Oh, my Lord! He's the Oh, my, Oh, my

p

Oh, my Lord! He's the Oh, my

Oh, my

1.

2.

10

S Lord! _____

A *mp* *sempre cantabile*
dark, rich

T *mp* *sempre cantabile*

B *mf* *sempre cantabile*
Tell the story!

Lord! _____ 1. Since Heav-en is so high, and I'm so low, Oh, my _____
nev - er been to Heav-en, but I've been told, Oh, my _____

Lord! _____ 1. Since Heav-en is so high, and I'm so low, Oh, my _____
nev - er been to Heav-en, but I've been told, Oh, my _____

Lord! _____ 1. Since Heav-en is so high, and I'm so low, Oh, my _____
nev - er been to Heav-en, but I've been told, Oh, my _____

14

A Lord! _____ I won-der if I'll ev - er see the Heav-en I know. _____
Lord! _____ That the streets up there are paved with gold. _____

T Lord! _____ I won-der if I'll ev - er see the Heav-en I know. _____
Lord! _____ That the streets up there are paved with gold. _____

B Lord! _____ I won-der if I'll ev - er see the Heav-en I know. _____
Lord! _____ That the streets up there are paved with gold. _____

* Alternate performance suggestion: Altos and tenors may sing on "Ah!" both times, with words at "Oh, my Lord."

23

p Lord! He's the lil-y of the val-ley, *mf* Oh, my good

mp Lord! He's the lil-y of the val-ley, *f* Oh, my

p Lord! He's the lil-y of the val-ley, the val-ley, *mf* Oh, my

mf Lord! Oh yes, He is! *p* He's the lil-y of the val-ley, *mf* Oh, my

27 *f* (a few selected voices) | 2.

Sop. Sing, sweet sis-ters! He's the

Soli *mp* *mf*

S 1 Lord! He's the Oh, my good Lord!

S 2 *mf* *mf*

S 3 Lord! He's the Oh, my good Lord!

A 1 Lord! He's the

A 2 *mp* Lord! He's the

(Men's Chorus)

(29) *mp* (Sing mezzo-voce or falsetto as needed.)

T 1 *mp* 1. "What kind of shoes are those? Oh, my shoes I wear are gos - pel shoes,"

T 2 *mf* 1. "What kind of shoes are those you wear? Oh, my shoes I wear are gos - pel shoes,"

B 1 *mp* 1. "What kind of shoes are those? Oh, my shoes I wear are gos - pel shoes,"

B 2 *mp* 1. "What kind of shoes are those? Oh, my shoes I wear are gos - pel shoes,"

33 *freely* Lord! That you can walk up - on the air?" And you can wear some, if you choose." *poco*

Lord! That you can walk up - on the air?" And you can wear some, if you choose." *poco*

Lord! That you can walk up - on the air?" And you can wear some, if you choose." *poco*

Lord! That you can walk up - on the air?" And you can wear some, if you choose." *poco*

* Tenors: Please sing the "E" only on the first time through. Then, on the repeat please sing the high "G" and "B" with the "E" as a full chord, and observe fermata both times.

36 *mf* 1. *a tempo* *mf* 2. *mf* *poco*

Oh, my Lord! 2. "These Oh, my Lord!

Oh, my Lord! 2. "These Oh, my Lord!

Oh, my Lord! 2. "These Oh, my Lord!

Oh, my Lord! 2. "These Oh, my Lord!

1. *a tempo* 2.

(Mixed Chorus)*a tempo, with conviction*

40 *f*

S
Now, I know He is the lil - y of the

a tempo, with conviction
f

A
Now, I know He is the lil - y of the

a tempo, with conviction
f

T
Now, I know He is the lil - y of the

a tempo, with conviction
f

B
Now, I know He is the lil - y of the

a tempo

45

Allargando

lil - y of the val - ley,

lil - y of the val - ley,

Joyously emphatic!

f
He is the lil - y of the val - ley,

Joyously emphatic!

f
He is the lil - y of the val - ley,

lil - y of the val - ley,

Allargando

