

ABOUT TODAY'S MUSIC



Langston Hughes

Although the melody had been first recorded by the Dixie Jubilee Singers in 1924, "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around" was made popular in modern times in Albany (Georgia) by Reverend Ralph Abernathy during the summer of 1962 when mass arrests and civil rights demonstrations erupted for the second time in that city. He taught it one night to a mass meeting of the community at Mount Zion Baptist Church. It immediately caught on and thereafter became widely used as a Freedom Song that was sung as an anthem of protest during the Civil Rights Movement. Similar to the African American Spiritual, the texts of these Freedom Songs communicated messages of struggle, faith, determination, and perseverance:

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around,
Turn me around, turn me around.
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around,
I'm gonna keep on walkin', keep n talkin',
Marchin' up to Freedom Land.

We offer the Worcester premiere of Rollo Dillworth's upbeat arrangement for full choir with wonderful harmonies and a driving rhythm. Dillworth (b. 1970), a composer and arranger of many spirituals, has also incorporated text from a Langston Hughes (1902-1967) poem entitled, "Words Like Freedom":

There are words like Freedom | Sweet and wonderful to say.
On my heartstrings freedom sings | All day everyday.
There are words like Liberty | That almost make me cry.
If you had known what I know | You would know why.

Like other writers who flourished during the period of the Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes sought to establish and express African American cultural identity through the creative performing arts. A vast number of Hughes' poems reflected themes of racial equality and justice.