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Program, 1980 September 26 - 28, 2nd Annual Kansas Folklife Festival

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[1980]



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Eva Jessye Ensemble

Presently serving as artist-in-residence at Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas, Dr. Eva Jessye has been hailed by musicians and dignitaries all over the United States and several foreign countries as the "grand lady of American music."

Born before 1900 in Coffeyville, Kansas, Dr. Jessye grew up with music all around her—her family were particularly fine singers and dancers. After receiving extensive formal university training in musical composition and arranging, she went to New York City where she became a prominent figure in the Harlem Renaissance of the late teens, 20's, and early 30's, one of the first major outpourings of Afro-American formal culture.

Her accomplishments are staggering. A former school teacher and newspaper woman, she is also a writer, lecturer, composer, and choral director. In 1935 she was engaged by DuBoise Heyward and George Gershwin as the choral director for *Porgy and Bess*. She has also done arrangements for the noted composer Virgil Thomson, was musical director for MGM's *Hallelujah*, and has received countless citations, honors, and awards, including the Kansas Medal of Achievement as "Distinguished Kansan and State Treasure."

Perhaps most significantly for the Kansas Folklife Festival, she has, in addition to developing her own classical musical skills, been teaching her young students at Pittsburg State some of the songs she remembers from her early childhood in Coffeyville. She has taught Lemuel Shepard to play and sing the blues of her youth. Likewise she has shared her remembered gospel and folk songs with soprano Joyce Medford, a music teacher, singer, and actress in Pittsburg, and with Deborah Pullum, a student at Missouri Southern in Joplin.

Dr. Jessye is one of those rare and treasured people who not only can go far beyond home origins to become respected in a formal context, but who can also retain a complete memory and respect for the beautiful folk heritage from which she came. It is this heritage that she and her friends will be sharing with us at this year's festival.

Gospelettes: Mennonite Triple Trio

Like many other peoples, the Mennonites came to this country to escape religious persecution and to seek freedom in a land they could call their own. In addition they, like the Volga Germans, sought freedom from military conscription.

Descendants of the Anabaptist movement that grew out of the Reformation in the 16th century, the Mennonites took their name from Menno Simons, a Dutch Catholic priest who renounced his religion in 1536 to organize and lead the remnant Anabaptist groups.

Many years later a group of Mennonites led by Jacob Ammon broke from the larger group because of differences regarding dress, baptism, and other matters. This group generally became known as Amish or Amish Mennonite. Through the years several distinct sects developed among the Mennonites and Amish, largely because of different attitudes toward dress, modes of transportation, and education rather than basic tenets, which have remained virtually constant.

Even within the Hutchinson-Newton-Moundridge area, at least six distinct groups exist, from the conservative Yoder, Kansas Amish who allow no phones, cars, or electricity, to the younger "Beachy" Amish, the conservative Mennonite, and other Mennonite groups. No matter how great or small their differences, however, in times of tragedy, disaster, or need they all work together.

The Gospelettes perfectly reflect this sharing. The nine women, all from the Hutchinson area—Emma Yutzy, Sharla Seymour, Kay Cully, Anna Ruth Yutzy, Katie Miller, Catherine Yoder, Joella Schrock, Alma Jean Redeger, Nora Nisly, plus their leader Rachel Bontrager—represent three different churches. But they share a common love for singing and praising the Lord.

They have appeared at the annual Mennonite Relief Fund Sale in Hutchinson plus numerous churches and rest homes. They will bring their special message of joy to the Folklife Festival audience around noon on Sunday.



Deborah Pullum....Dr. Eva Jessye....Joyce Medford....
Lemuel Shepard.

Stanley and Theresa Kijowski

The polka is one of America's most popular dance forms and is mostly associated with the Polish heritage, although Czechs, Germans, Slovenes, Croats, Austrians, and others have their own style of polka. Most of us would think of dancing the polka to a fairly huge ensemble, probably consisting of accordion, saxophones, trumpet, bass, and drums. For this year's Festival, however, we have a Polish-American couple who play an older, though no less exciting, style of polka.

Stan Kijowski was born in Poland, where he learned to play fiddle and trumpet in local bands. When he moved to Kansas City he met Theresa, a fine singer and accordion player. The musical and emotional chemistry worked, and, as a couple, they have been entertaining Kansans for more than 75 years.

In Abilene they only play occasionally for special occasions. We are fortunate that they consider the Festival to be such an event.

Eva Jessye

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Director, Eva Jessye Choir

Consultant in Creative Programs

September 30, 1980

MR. CARR:

You can see what a fine job of writing was done by the Festival publicity staff...exceptional. The entire thing stemmed from a tape of and old Kansas blues made by Lemuel Shepard, under my tutelage ..and introduced on the program presented by Mme 'T' June 7th, 1979. ..at her Workshop...my subject was then

"THE INCREDIBLE DIVERSITY OF AFRO-AMERI CAN VOCAL MUSIC"

Perhaps you witnessed it...made a pronounced impression and Lemuel made his first appearance as singer-guitarist, singing

"HI, HIGH-BROWN"

It is an interesting story. When the representative of the Festival, Bill Pearson, visited the campus, looking for material and performers He heard the Shepard tape and was so excited over its authenticity that he arranged to have our unit perform at the Festival, with the most excellent result. I must ask you to return the program after perusing.. I had only a few and had to spread them to advantageous persons (you understand).

Cordially,

