Women and Migration

Responses in Art and History

EDITED BY

DEBORAH WILLIS, ELLYN
TOSCANO AND KALIA
BROOKS NELSON

<https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

© 2019 Deborah Willis, Ellyn Toscano and Kalia Brooks Nelson

Copyright of individual chapters is maintained by the chapters' authors.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0). This license allows you to share, copy, distribute and transmit the text; to adapt the text and to make commercial use of the text providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

Deborah Willis, Ellyn Toscano and Kalia Brooks Nelson (eds.), *Women and Migration: Responses in Art and History*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0153>

In order to access detailed and updated information on the license, please visit, <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/product/840#copyright>

Further details about CC BY licenses are available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at <https://archive.org/web>

Updated digital material and resources associated with this volume are available at <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/product/840#resources>

Every effort has been made to identify and contact copyright holders and any omission or error will be corrected if notification is made to the publisher.

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-78374-565-4

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-78374-566-1

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-78374-567-8

ISBN Digital ebook (epub): 978-1-78374-568-5

ISBN Digital ebook (mobi): 978-1-78374-569-2

ISBN Digital (XML): 978-1-78374-674-3

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0153

Cover image: Sama Alshaibi, *Sabkhat al-Milḥ* (Salt Flats) 2014, from the '*Silsila*' series, Chromogenic print mounted on Diasac, 47" diameter. © Sama Alshaibi and Ayyam Gallery. Cover design: Anna Gatti.

All paper used by Open Book Publishers is SFI (Sustainable Forestry Initiative), PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes) and Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC® certified).

33. Performing a Life: Mattie Allen McAdoo's Odyssey from Ohio to South Africa, Australia and Beyond, 1890–1900

Paulette Young

Introduction

A well-dressed attractive African-American young woman poses for her portrait at the Richmond Studio. She wears a fitted jacket with large lapels and brocade trim, her starched winged-collar shirt adorned with a ribbon bow tie, paired over a long, richly draped skirt finished with a tightly cinched front-laced corset at her waist. She holds the brim of a beaver cap against her thigh and displays a tennis racket prominently across her body like a baby. Her hair is pulled away from her face with soft curls at front calling attention to her thick eyebrows and large, dark piercing eyes. She gazes directly into the camera's lens, spellbound by the experience of capturing this moment in time — or perhaps she is transfixing the viewer with her determined gaze. She stands within a carefully placed arrangement of ferns and other plants. The photo studio's painted background has a blurred tree and a winding stream with flowers and other plants, projecting a sense of otherworldliness (see Fig. 33.1). The hand-scripted notation on the upper right of the

reverse side of this cabinet card photograph identifies the sitter as 'Martha McAdoo', photographed by Houghton and George at The Richmond Studio, 38 Richmond Hill, Port Elizabeth. Charles Henry George and A. T. Houghton operated their studio at this address in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa in 1892.

Fig. 33.1 Mattie A. McAdoo with tennis racquet. Photo by The Richmond Studio (ca. 1890–91), Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. Image courtesy of Young Robertson Gallery Collection, New York. All rights reserved.

This image presents a first-person perspective, by a Black woman, on life in South Africa during the late 1800s through a moment caught in the camera's lens. It is an important archival text and visual language documenting a glimpse into the life of an African-American woman living and working abroad.¹ For example, the tennis racquet in this photographic portrait is a thoughtful commentary on the determination

1 During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, prominent African Americans understood and fully embraced the power of the photograph to influence public perceptions concerning race and class and adopted this new medium in their struggle for social, economic and political justice. African-American intellectuals like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, among others, believed that the photographic image had the potential to communicate ideals beyond words from a first-person perspective and promote social, political and cultural progress for Blacks and Americans in general. See Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle

of this Black woman to obtain full inclusion in the cultural norms of the day. The tennis racquet is not a simple prop but likely deliberately selected to represent a cosmopolitan awareness of contemporary life. The oldest tennis club in South Africa was the Richmond Tennis Club, established in 1877. By 1881, tennis had become a major feature of colonial life in Durban and Pietermaritzburg.² However, Blacks were largely restricted from participation in this highly popular cultural phenomenon in Africa and the US.

Who Was Martha Allan McAdoo?

Background

Before she was Martha McAdoo, Martha Eliza Allan, known as 'Mattie' to her family and friends, was born on 27 January 1868 in Columbus, Ohio where she studied singing and attended public schools (see Figs. 33.2 and 33.3). Mattie was a talented contralto who received critical praise in the local press. Commenting on her strong voice, a critic noted, 'To hear her sing, and not seeing the singer, one would judge at once it was a male tenor.'³ After graduating from the Columbus Normal High School, Mattie taught for two years in Ohio and Washington, D.C. Restless and tired of teaching, she responded to an advertisement by Mr Orpheus Myron McAdoo for singers interested in performing abroad (see Figs. 33.4 and 33.5).

Smith (eds.), *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

- 2 The period between 1775 and 1885 marked the rise of sports as leisure activity in post-industrial England and the introduction of sports, including tennis, to South Africa. While tennis served as an important part of the assimilation and mobilization of the new South African elites, Black Africans were segregated from these institutions. However, by the end of the 1880s, Blacks had formed their own tennis clubs in several towns. Djata notes, 'South African Black elites used sports as a measure of social status.' The 'imperial' sports were significant for the African elite to 'establish their "civilized credentials" in the Black community and in the eyes of whites.' Sundiata A. Djata, *Blacks at the Net: Black Achievement in the History of Tennis, Volume II* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), p. 53.
- 3 'A Phenomenal Vocalist', *Cleveland Gazette*, 4 July 1891.

Fig. 33.2 (left) Marta 'Mattie' Eliza Allan, contralto calling card. Photo by Urlin & Pfeifer Studio, Columbus, Ohio, ca. 1884. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

Fig. 33.3 (right) Martha 'Mattie' Eliza Allan's high school graduation portrait. Photo by Urlin Studio, Columbus, Ohio, ca. 1885. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

Young Mr. McAdoo had great experience as a traveling performer. While a student at the Hampton Institute in Virginia (now Hampton University), he was a founding member of the Hampton Student Quartette.⁴ Orpheus had also been leading baritone for the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a company originally formed in 1873 by Fisk University students to raise funds for their school, an education center for Blacks, located in Nashville, Tennessee. The group's performance of Negro spirituals was well received; by 1875, they earned close to \$100,000 which enabled them to complete Jubilee Hall. Their rich success inspired the formation of similar groups of Jubilee Singers in other Black colleges including Hampton, Tuskegee and Wilberforce, to name a few. In 1886, Orpheus

4 Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music 1889–1895* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), p. 120.

and the troupe, under the direction of Frederick J. Loudin, commenced a worldwide tour that included England, Australia, India, Japan and Burma. Three years later, McAdoo built on his experience with the Fisk Jubilee Singers to form his own company.⁵ Trusting Mr McAdoo's success and experience in the international performing arena, Mattie signed a contract as soloist with *Orpheus Myron McAdoo's Virginia Concert Company and Jubilee Singers* for a three-year tour including Great Britain, Glasgow, India and the West Indies.

Fig. 33.4 (left) Orpheus Myron McAdoo, formal portrait. Photo by Melba Studio, Melbourne, Australia, ca. 1892. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

Fig. 33.5 (right) Orpheus Myron McAdoo, formal portrait, 'Orpheus M. McAdoo, Sole Proprietor and Director of the Original Jubilee Singers'. Photo by Talma Studio, Melbourne and Sydney, Australia, ca. 1892. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

What would drive a twenty-two-year-old, educated and gainfully employed Negro woman in 1890 to leave her familiar life behind and migrate to faraway lands?

⁵ Ibid.

Life in Ohio and Beyond

Mattie Allan was born during the Civil War era, a period of great tumult that probably influenced her decision to migrate abroad. Although Ohio outlawed slavery in 1802 and played a major role in the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad, discrimination on public transportation, in theaters, restaurants and jobs persisted. African-American women's employment choices were generally limited to teaching, midwifery, and housekeeping, including working as a maid, cook or laundress.⁶ Mattie, however, was aware of her well-received singing and performance talents and her inner drive to be a success. She saw the opportunity to escape the bonds of racism and sexism and realize her dream to be an international star.

Mattie's home state's newspaper, the *Cleveland Gazette*, a Black-owned weekly dedicated to examining issues impacting the African-American community, describes her as 'well educated, having the advantage of being schooled along with white pupils in the mixed schools of Columbus.' 'Tall and stately looking, very fair, could easily pass for white, did she desire.' Commenting on her impending foray abroad, the paper noted, 'To many a young woman, the idea of such a trip, far away from home, amidst strangers would have caused them to recoil, but Miss Allen is quite masculine in her will, and nothing ever daunts her. The circumscribed limit of the school room was always an undesirable restraint to her. She was restless and like a caged bird longed for freedom, for the possibilities and probabilities of the great world. As she often said, 'I want to do something and be something, I want to make a name!''⁷

Orpheus McAdoo understood the potential for his group in South Africa and Australia. During his previous tours with the Fisk Jubilee singers, he witnessed the transformative power of music on both white and Black audiences. He believed that a group of talented, cultivated representatives of the Black race would challenge the stereotypes held by local whites and would have a profound effect on African Blacks. Dress, style and manner were key components of the group's acceptance by the South African and Australian communities.⁸

6 'African Americans in Ohio', *Ohio Memory*, <https://www.ohiomemory.org>

7 'A Phenomenal Vocalist.' In 1891-93, Cleveland's [African-American] *Gazette* reported regularly on the activities of the Jubilee Singers.

8 Information compiled from various materials from the archives of Yale University underscore the enormous success of McAdoo's singers in South Africa. Orpheus M.

Dress and Presentation through Photographs

Orpheus and Mattie carefully chose the style of dress in which the group would present themselves to the public. They understood the powerful role of clothing and style in presenting a sophisticated and professional aura. Mattie's style and confidence did not go unnoticed by the press (see Fig. 33.6).

Fig. 33.6 Studio portrait of Mattie and Orpheus McAdoo in stylish dress. Photo by Alba Studio, Sydney, Australia, ca. 1892. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Presenting themselves as talented, cultivated representatives of their race debunked many of the negative stereotypes held by the white colonists, while delighting the educated South African Blacks (Abbott and Seroff, *Out of Sight*, p. 121).

Campbell notes, 'The McAdoo Singers' visit touched South Africans across boundaries of race and class, but it had its most galvanic effect on educated African Christians. To "progressive" Africans, caught in the ebb tide of nineteenth-century liberalism, the Singers offered a testament of hope, a confirmation not only of prevailing beliefs about African-American progress and attainment but of their own imagined future. The Singers' dress was dapper, their demeanour urbane. They spoke English fluently, a hallmark of elite status in South Africa. While separated from slavery by just a generation, they moved easily through South African society as honorary whites, performing for mixed audiences and earning the plaudits of white society.' James Campbell, 'Models and Metaphors: Industrial Education in the United States and South Africa', in Ran Greenstein (ed.), *Comparative Perspectives on South Africa* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc. 1998), pp. 90–134 (p. 109).

The most superb dress seen for a long time on the stage here was worn Tuesday night by Madame Mattie Allan McAdoo. It was a delicate sea-green floral silk, with a short train. The V-shaped apron was embroidered in crimson true lovers' knots, two rows of crimson made the hem, and small crimson bows were on the short sleeves, also exquisite lace a diamond necklace, brooch and bracelets, and enormous pearls finishing off the most elaborate dress worn here by any singer for a long time. Mrs. McAdoo is a graceful woman.⁹

Madame Mattie Allen McAdoo is a chic dresser. Her pink brocade with frills and lace jacket was a whiff from Paris, I'm sure. But her putty colored cloth great coat, vandyked on the hem, with a trained skirt trailing underneath, topped by a violet hat, is charming. Now what other woman would be daring enough to wear a violet hat, with violet tulle veil, ending in immense loops and ends of tulle waving under the left ear? Not many...¹⁰

Fig. 33.7 Mattie A. McAdoo as a soloist. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

-
- 9 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Australian newspaper clipping, Scrapbooks 1886–95.
- 10 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Scrapbooks 1886–95.

Fig. 33.8 Mattie A. McAdoo (2nd from left) with her quartet. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

Mattie and Orpheus also understood the power of the photograph to create perceptions around race, class and gender and called upon it as a way to promote their musical genius and also speak for social justice. Their studio portraits were a contrast to servile stereotypical images of the time. Carefully constructed studio portraits in Victorian formal attire with proper accoutrements, including hair and accessories, highlight the importance of the presentation of the self to counteract common beliefs and negative stereotypes of Negroes of the period (see Figs. 33.4–9).

These photographs show bold figures possessed of great character, as displayed through their posture and comportment. They also highlight a sense of cosmopolitan life. These images present a first-person perspective, from a Black woman, of life in South Africa, Australia and America at the time through a moment caught in the camera's lens. It is an important archival text documenting a period (1890 to the early 1900s) in the life of a Black family living and working abroad.

On to South Africa and Beyond

On 21 June 1890, The Virginia Concert Company and Jubilee Singers opened at Cape Town, South Africa to a large audience. 'On Saturday evening, the hall was packed from floor to ceiling with a most enthusiastic audience, who testified by their rapturous applause that they heartily enjoyed the various efforts of the singers and the fine programme presented.'¹¹

Orpheus McAdoo used creative strategies to navigate race including singing 'quaint, melodious and charming singing' of traditional gospel songs designed to highlight racial uplift.¹² Educated Black South Africans also embraced the company and felt proud of their accomplishments.

The company was highly successful, performing in large cities and small towns from 1890–92. Their singing and performance style had a profound effect on both white and Black African audiences. Many listeners found the spiritual songs of slavery inspiring. Scholars credit McAdoo's tour as a defining moment in the development of South African choral music, pointing to the rise of the 'African Jubilee Singers' as a by-product of the Virginia Jubilee Singer's tour.¹³ Bloemfontein has quite taken to the Jubilee Singers, and considering the admirable manner in which the arrangements are carried out, and the decided talent of the performers, to say nothing of the unique character of the entertainment provided, it is no wonder that they have been received in our midst in the most enthusiastic manner. Since their first appearance on Friday evening, which was under the distinguished patronage of Mrs. Reitz and a large party from the Presidency, they have been rewarded with

11 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Scrapbooks 1886–95.

12 Chinua Akimaro Thelwell discusses McAdoo's specific application of racial uplift politics as a strategy to counter the commonplace notions of Black regressive behavior. He highlights McAdoo's canny ability to merge Black civility and refinement and minstrelsy on the stage to promote a new racial narrative. Chinua Akimaro Thelwell, "'Modernizing' Hybridity: McAdoo's Jubilee Singers, McAdoo's Minstrels, and Racial Uplift Politics in South Africa, 1890–1898', *The Journal of South African and American Studies*, 15:1 (2014), 3–28, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17533171.2013.864169>.

13 For a detailed examination of the historical impact of McAdoo's spiritual songs of slavery on Black South African choral practices, see Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Idem, *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

crowded houses, such as have never been witnessed in the Town Hall for the purpose of hearing any professional performance, in the history of our City. Mr. McAdoo is a genuine type of the man of the world. He has travelled all over the civilized globe, and is a keen observer of human nature, and a man with whom the most learned can spend an hour's profitable conversation.'¹⁴

Mattie Allan was especially favored. Local newspapers noted, 'Miss Allan has a genuine Tenor voice, which she manipulates artistically and charms her audience greatly.'¹⁵ 'Miss Mattie Allan, the lady tenor, created a perfect furore, [sic] and received the honor of a double encore, the audience being particularly delighted with her charming jodeling [sic].'¹⁶ 'Miss Mattie Allen was encored over and over again, her singularly beautiful voice being thoroughly appreciated.'¹⁷ However, while the company's musical talent was appreciated, their stay in South Africa was not without incident.

Race and Performance in South Africa

While viewed as 'Negro' in the United States, the company was reclassified in different terms, including 'Colored' in South Africa.¹⁸ A newspaper article reflects the confusion regarding the troupe's racial identities. Under the heading, 'Arrivals' the article states, 'The Jubilee Singers arrived yesterday and created quite a commotion at the Grand Hotel, where they are staying, it being somewhat unusual to see such a large number of creoles, quadroons, and West Indian natives gathered together at one dinner table. The gentlemen of the company are all fine-looking fellows, and there is always a fascination about the large dark eyes of a creole or quadroon lady, so that altogether it will be easily understood that the arrival of the singers attracted considerable attention.'¹⁹

14 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers.

15 'The Jubilee Singers,' *The Wynberg Times*, 13 July 1895.

16 'Amusements. Jubilee Singers,' *The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette*, 28 January 1896.

17 'The Jubilee Singers,' *The Teadock Register*, 17 April 1896.

18 Thewell asserts that McAdoo strategically used South Africa's three-tiered racial classification system to his advantage by claiming to be a 'Coloured' American, to gain social and cultural entrée. Thewell, "'Modernizing' Hybridity'.

19 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Scrapbooks 1886-95.

The troupe was given status as 'honorary white,' which was bestowed upon all Blacks as non-African visitors.²⁰ They could travel over all regions in South Africa, including the mines and after sunset.²¹ However, to be sure, not everyone was enamored with the idea of Blacks representing American ideals. In an interview with *The Australian Christian World*, McAdoo related the group's encounter with the 'colour line' in South Africa. When the singers were invited by the American Consul to a 4th of July celebration in Cape Town, McAdoo revealed that the consul received a letter denouncing the invitation of 'niggers' to a public dinner. The writer was a Georgian from America who stated he had never sat at the same table as a Black man and never would. The Counsel published the letter verbatim to the consternation of the Jubilee Singers' supporters who demanded the Georgian show his face.²² While this led to great advertising for the company, all was not well.

While preparing to leave Cape Town for the interior, the company was reminded of the strong racial prejudice, particularly in Transvaal and the Orange Free State, where there was a 9pm curfew for Blacks. Native-born Black Africans were required to have passes for travel in the country and could not own a business. While the company did secure a special proclamation written in Dutch and English that allowed the group free movement and safe passage, McAdoo and his members were uneasy with this prejudicial treatment, specifically the Pass System.²³ In a letter to his mentor, General S. C. Armstrong, founder and president of Hampton Institute, he wrote: 'There is no country in the world where prejudice is so strong as here in Africa. The native here is treated as badly as ever the slave was treated in Georgia. Here in Africa the native laws are most unjust; such as any Christian person would be ashamed of. Do you credit a law in a civilized community compelling every man of dark skin, even though he is a

20 Campbell, 'Models and Metaphors', p. 109.

21 The New Jagersfontein Mining & Exploration Company, Limited presented a pass to 'Mr. McAdoo & Party of 8 to visit the Company's Compounds and works within the Mining Area June 1896, after Sunset'. (Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers.) Black South Africans were generally only given restricted access in daytime during working hours.

22 'The Jubilee Singers,' *The Australian Christian World*, 30 June 1892, p. 5.

23 Ibid.

citizen of another country, to be in his house by 9 o'clock at night, or he be arrested? [...] Black people who are seen out after 9 o'clock must have passes from their masters. Indeed, it is so strict that natives have to get passes for day travel.'²⁴

Upon reaching Durban, McAdoo recalled that the company settled into their rooms booked three months prior, but they were asked to leave. The landlady informed them that because they were Black, she would lose her borders and be ruined and pleaded, 'for the sake of my dear daughters, you must go.' Orpheus McAdoo assured the woman that 'I have six ladies upstairs, who have fair, white souls, even though their skins are dark [...] I'll get all my young men to sign an agreement not to make love to your daughters, so you'll be safe on that score.' But to no avail. New accommodation had to be found in the pouring rain and it was close to midnight before they were resettled. It so happened that the racist Georgian from Cape Town was courting one of the landlady's daughters and browbeat the woman with warnings of miscegenation until she relented. McAdoo related the incident to the audience from the stage after a thrilling and well-received performance. As fate would have it, the daughters were in the audience along with the racist Georgian suitor, who was accosted and badly beaten by his fellow concert goers.²⁵

In late January 1892, the company embarked on a tour of Australia and New Zealand. But before leaving South Africa, Orpheus and Mattie married in a noon ceremony at the residence of Mr And Mrs William Bunton, followed by a reception at the Grand Hotel, Port Elizabeth, Cape Colony, South Africa. The African-American weekly, *The Cleveland Gazette*, which closely documented the concert company with a special emphasis and pride in their native daughter Mattie, highlighted a 'Wedding in the Transvaal' noting that 'Exceptionally fine invitations announcing the marriage, January 27th [1891] at Port Elizabeth, Cape Colony, South Africa, of Miss Mattie E. Allen of Columbus, Ohio, and

24 'A Letter from South Africa: Black Laws in the Orange Free State in Africa,' [n.d.], published in *Southern Workman*, 19 November 1890: 120, reprinted in Josephine Wright, 'Orpheus Myron McAdoo — Singer, Impresario', *The Black Perspective in Music* 4:3 (1976), 320–27 (p. 322).

25 'The Jubilee Singers,' *The Australian Christian World*, 30 June 1892, p. 5. Also, 'The Jubilee Singers. Orpheus is interviewed,' *The Star*, 17 September 1891.

Orpheus Myron McAdoo have reached many of their friends in this country'²⁶ (see Fig. 33.9). It is important to note that the Marriage Justice considered not marrying Mattie and Orpheus given that the bride had 'extremely fair skin, whose father is white' which would violate cross-racial marriages in South Africa. Despite her appearance to many as 'white', Mattie never chose to adopt a white identity and instead she strongly embraced her African heritage. She proudly identified herself as 'Negro' and the marriage proceeded.

Fig. 33.9 Invitation to the marriage of Miss Mattie E. Allan to Mr. Orpheus Myron McAdoo, Port Elizabeth, Cape Colony, South Africa, 1892. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

While touring in Tasmania, Mattie gave birth to Master Myron Holder Ward McAdoo. 'Master Myron Ward McAdoo "The Jubilee Baby" arrived in Hobart Tasmania, Thursday afternoon, February 9, 1893 at 4:20 o'clock. Master Myron presents his love and compliments' (see Fig. 33.10).

26 'A Wedding in Transvaal,' *Cleveland Gazette*, 10 January 1891.

Fig. 33.10 Birth announcement for Master Myron Holder Ward McAdoo, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, 9 February 1893. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

Fig. 33.11 Baby Myron McAdoo with puppy. Photo by W. Laws Caney Studio, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, ca. 1895–96. Image courtesy of Young Robertson Gallery Collection, New York. All rights reserved.

Fig. 33.12 Baby Myron McAdoo with rocking horse. Photo by W. Laws Caney Studio, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, ca. 1895–96. Image courtesy of Young Robertson Gallery Collection, New York. All rights reserved.

The company left Australia and New Zealand returned to South Africa in 1895 for a second tour. This time, responding to changes in musical tastes, the company broadened its repertoire to include comedy and ministry. The group's name was changed from *the Virginia Concert Company and Jubilee Singers* and renamed *McAdoo's Minstrel and Vaudeville Company* and included a variety of singers and performers²⁷ (see Figs. 33.13 and 33.14).

Fig. 33.13 Jubilee Singers as vaudeville concert singers. Note little Myron McAdoo at bottom right, ca. 1898. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

27 Abbott and Seroff, *Out of Sight*, p. 127.

Fig. 33.14 McAdoo Company performers. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

McAdoo's company left South Africa and went back to Australia in 1898 and, while touring there, Orpheus returned to the US to assemble a modern African-American minstrel troupe²⁸ named *The Georgia Minstrels and Alabama Cakewalkers*. Mattie was left in charge of the Jubilee Singers in his stead and the company continued to flourish.²⁹ McAdoo's

28 Whiteoak notes that Black American 'blackface' artists entered the minstrel field after the Civil War, noting that, 'to be successful, they had to adopt and adapt the demeaning blackface stereotyping and comic distortion of themselves and their culture. [...] While white minstrels in burnt-cork make-up were respected for cleverness of their parody [...] African-American minstrels were often perceived by colonial Australians as just playing their African-American selves — mildly exotic and inherently amusing live exhibits.' John Whiteoak, 'A Good Black Music Story?: Black American Stars in Australian Musical Entertainment Before "Jazz"', in Stephen Loy, Julie Rickwood and Samantha Bennett (eds.), *Popular Music, Stars and Stardom* (Acton: Australian National University Press, 2018), pp. 37–54, <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n4313/pdf/ch03.pdf>. To combat this misinterpretation of African-American performance styles, McAdoo's Georgia Minstrels and Alabama Cakewalkers introduced the new 'ragtime' and cakewalk-style minstrelsy to Australia. See John Whiteoak, *Playing Ad Lib: Improvisatory Music in Australia, 1836–1970* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1999), pp. 116–34.

29 'Orpheus and His Lyre, On a Big Tour. Interview with Mr. McAdoo', *Weekly Edition*, 14 November 1896. It is important to note the great success of the group at this

Minstrels knew their audience and were praised for the 'freshness and originality' of their show, which included a magnificent performance of 'the Cake Walk'. The ability to reinvent the group served McAdoo well. He noted, 'I have met with financial success far and away beyond my wildest dreams and anticipations. In all my travels, I have met with the most flattering receptions, and the press generally have been unanimous in their kind expressions of praise.' He continued, 'Future Hopes. When I have finished with my present line of business, my crowning ambition is to open a first-class Coloured Opera Company in Great Britain, return to South Africa, and my *ultima thule* is Australia, and home to Virginia.'³⁰ This was not to be. Six weeks after the end of the Australia tour, on 17 July 1900, Orpheus McAdoo took ill and died at the age of forty-two.³¹ He is buried in Waverly Cemetery, Sydney Australia (see Fig. 33.12).

A Return to the US

After her husband's death and funeral, Mattie returned to the US with her son Myron, initially living in Cleveland. She later moved to Boston where she educated Myron and finally settled in Washington, D.C. where she spent the remainder of her life.

Meanwhile, McAdoo's Jubilee Company rebranded itself as, 'McAdoo's Fisk Jubilee Singers'. They performed in Australia and New Zealand for the next three years. Some members broke away from the company and formed their own performing groups. Orpheus's brother Eugene created a troupe and travelled to England with much success. Eventually McAdoo's Jubilee Company became integrated with white Australians and continued performing in the country into the early 1930's.³²

Back in the US, Mattie continued performing, forming a new group, this time with her sister Lula Allen and her brother Robert Allen (see Fig. 33. 15). She also performed as a soloist and with a quartette (see Figs. 33.7 and 33.8). Mattie became a highly successful businesswoman in her own right, no doubt building on her experiences abroad to co-manage

point. In this interview, McAdoo notes that the company had given 726 concerts in South Africa and over 3,000 in Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand.

30 'The Jubilee Singers. Orpheus is interviewed,' *The Star*, 17 September 1891.

31 Abbott and Seroff, *Out of Sight*, pp. 139–40.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 140–43.

Fig. 33.15 Broadside advertisement for Opera House performance by Mattie McAdoo and her brother Robert Allen and sister Lula Allen. Note the surname has changed from Allan to Allen. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

the concert company while adjusting to changing cultural norms and new personalities. Her estate notes an exchange receipt (dated 10 April 1901) from the London, Paris & American Bank for \$27,622.60 (close to approx. \$700,000 today). She owned many rental properties in Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts, invested in several commercial interests including an Australian gold dredging company in New South Wales, insurance companies and land, while providing loans to friends and community members (at times, holding stock share certificates as collateral).³³

Mattie was publically identified as a 'race woman' due to her focused efforts to identify and support causes that presented clear and immediate benefits to African Americans. As a woman, she believed that she could play a significant role in improving the lives of African Americans. She was well aware of the negative impact of racism and sexism yet she was

³³ Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Diaries, Mattie McAdoo, 1915, box 3, folder 38. This area of McAdoo's life is the subject of my further research.

not held hostage by these factors. She consciously accepted her role as a leader in her family and the international community at large.

Mattie's diaries and day planners indicate that she maintained an active community, political and social life and further support her identity as a 'race woman':³⁴

- 4 January 1915 she marks 'My Sweetheart's birthday' [fifteen years after his death];
- 9 February 1915 she notes, 'My son's birthday. I feel very joyous for some reason, been singing + dancing all morn[ing]...'
- On Sunday, 14 March 1915 she attended a meeting at the Tremont Theatre, Boston by the Boston Equal Suffrage Association for Good Government; speakers included Mr Butler R. Wilson, director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People;
- she notes the 18 April 1915 protests supported by more than 3,000 African Americans led by African American publisher, William Monroe Trotter against the white supremacist propagandist film, 'Birth of a Nation';
- Sunday, 25 April 1915, 'Dr. Crothers had a meeting at his church', [where he spoke on 'The Need of a Better Understanding of the Negro Problem in the North.'];
- Sunday, 30 May 1915, 'I went to hear Dr. DuBois. He was simply splendid as he is always. Faneuil Hall was crowded...'

The Boston Record noted, 'Mrs. Mattie McAdoo, one of the best known colored educators, and reputed to be the wealthiest woman of her race in this country, has started on her seventh trip round the world. Ten years ago she came from far-off Antipodes to educate her son in this city. He has completed his studies, and with his mother will tour the world. They will go to Sydney, Australia, via Vancouver, and thence round the world.'³⁵ Her phonebook contained the numbers for Dorothy Porter, scholar and longtime librarian of Howard University; the artist and Howard University scholar and professor Dr. James Porter; pioneering

34 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Diaries, Mattie McAdoo, 1915, box 3, folder 38.

35 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers.

biochemist, Dr. Herbert Scurlock, and the Scurlock Photography Studio, owned and operated by his brother Addison N. Scurlock.³⁶

Mattie worked tirelessly to help to improve the quality of life of her fellow African Americans. She became an advocate for educational, economic, social and political reforms. She supported causes centering on racial equality and progress (see Fig. 33.16). Towards the end of her life, Mattie was the General Secretary for the Phyllis Wheatley Young Women's Christian Association of Washington, D.C. from 1921 until her death on 7 August 1936.³⁷ The Phyllis Wheatley YWCA was started by forward-thinking African-American women to provide a space for 'colored' women and girls for housing, training, and self-improvement. It was named after Phyllis Wheatley (1753–84), who was one of the first professional poets and writers in the US.

Fig. 33.16 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Conference Committee Chairmen. Mattie A. McAdoo, second row, second from left. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Phyllis Wheatley YMCA contract, box 3, folder 42.

McAdoo's obituary identifies her as a 'Race Woman,' noting, 'Mrs. McAdoo was well known as a fighter for the Negro's rights. She was a member of the Interracial Committee of the Federal Council of Churches, a member of the Executive and Race Relations Committees of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and an active worker in the Community Chest (an important local charity providing relief to less fortunate residents of Washington, D.C.)'³⁸ (see Fig. 33.16.)

At her funeral, Rev Halley B. Taylor described Mattie as, 'never too busy to aid the race'.³⁹ Those honoring her life were varied: 'Persons from all walks of life, colored and white [...] fellow YWCA workers, school teachers, lawyers, physicians, an ex-Judge, laymen and young women, who had been schooled in the Young Women's Christian Association under her, present.'⁴⁰ Howard University professor and visual artist, Dr. James Porter was a pallbearer.

The experiences of Mattie Allen McAdoo, a woman of African descent, highlight her contribution as an active participant and cultural producer in the transnational history and development of African diaspora culture. Her story enriches the scholarly as well as conventional understandings of the public contributions of women of African descent to the history of travel and migration, performance, and activism in the diaspora. Mattie successfully navigated her roles as wife, mother, performer and African-American woman during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. During her migration from a student and musical prodigy in Ohio and a teacher in Washington, DC, to her travels as an international performer and to her return to the US as 'race woman', she did something, became something and she made a name!

38 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Clippings related to death of Mattie McAdoo, ca. 1936, box 3, folder 41, '[Mrs. McAdoo] Served Here as Executive: Traveled as Jubilee Singer; Leaves Son and Two Sisters'.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

Bibliography

- 'A Letter from South Africa: Black Laws in the Orange Free State in Africa,' n.d., published in *Southern Workman*, 19 November 1890, p. 120, reprinted in Josephine Wright, 'Orpheus Myron McAdoo: Singer, Impresario', *The Black Perspective in Music*, 4:3 (1976), 320–27, <https://www.doi.org/10.2307/1214541>.
- 'A Phenomenal Vocalist', *Cleveland Gazette*, 4 July 1891.
- 'A Wedding in Transvaal', *Cleveland Gazette*, 10 January 1891.
- 'Amusements. Jubilee Singers', *The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette*, 28 January 1896.
- '[Mrs. McAdoo] Served Here 15 Years as Executive: Traveled as Jubilee Singer; Leaves Son and Two Sisters', Clippings related to death of Mattie McAdoo, ca. 1936, box 3, folder 41, Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
- 'Orpheus and His Lyre, On a Big Tour. Interview with Mr. McAdoo', *Weekly Edition*, 14 November 1896.
- 'The Jubilee Singers. Orpheus is interviewed', *The Star*, 17 September 1891.
- 'The Jubilee Singers', *The Australian Christian World*, 30 June 1892, p. 5.
- 'The Jubilee Singers', *The Teadock Register*, 17 April 1896.
- 'The Jubilee Singers', *The Wynberg Times*, 13 July 1895.
- Abbott, Lynn and Doug Seroff, *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music 1889–1895* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002).
- Campbell, James, 'Models and Metaphors: Industrial Education in the United States and South Africa', in Ran Greenstein (ed.), *Comparative Perspectives on South Africa* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), pp. 90–134, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-26252-6_4
- Djata, Sundiata A. *Blacks at the Net: Black Achievement in the History of Tennis, Volume II* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.46-0961>
- Erlmann, Veit, *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), <https://doi.org/10.2307/221022>
- , *Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195123678.001.0001>
- Ohio Memory, 'African Americans in Ohio', <https://www.ohiomemory.org>
- Thelwell, Chinua Akimaro, "'Modernizing" Hybridity: McAdoo's Jubilee Singers, McAdoo's Minstrels, and Racial Uplift Politics in South Africa, 1890–1898', *The Journal of South African and American Studies*, 15:1 (2014), 3–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17533171.2013.864169>

- Wallace, Maurice O. and Shawn Michelle Smith (eds.), *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822394563>
- Whiteoak, John, 'A Good Black Music Story?: Black American Stars in Australian Musical Entertainment Before "Jazz"', in Stephen Loy, Julie Richwood and Samantha Bennett (eds.), *Popular Music, Stars and Stardom* (Acton: Australian National University Press, 2018), pp. 37–54, <https://doi.org/10.22459/pmss.06.2018.03>
- Whiteoak, John, *Playing Ad Lib: Improvisatory Music in Australia, 1836–1970* (Sydney: Currency Press 1999), pp. 116–34, <https://doi.org/10.1558/prbt.v4i4.28713>
- Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.