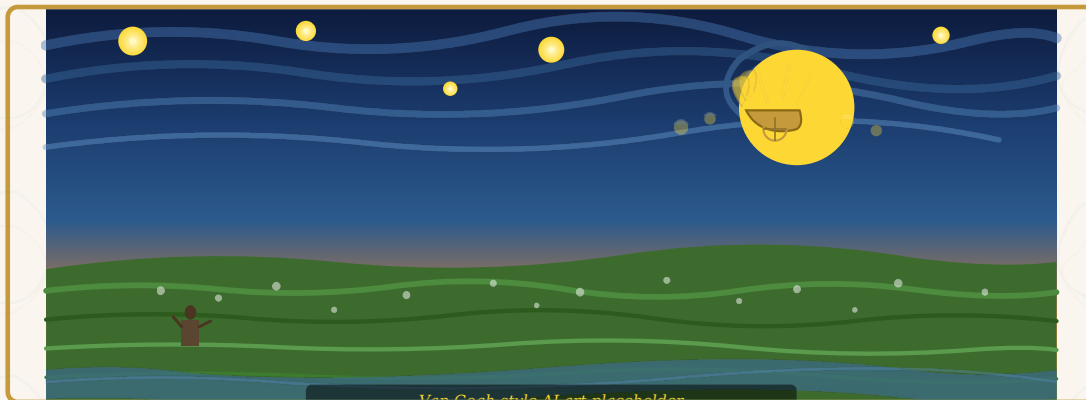


Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

African-American Spiritual · Attributed to Wallace Willis, c. 1860s



The Story / L'histoire

● English ● Français

The origins of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" reach deep into two of America's greatest tragedies. The song is attributed to Wallace Willis, an enslaved African American owned by a Choctaw Nation member. When the Choctaw were forcibly removed from Mississippi on the Trail of Tears, Willis was brought to Oklahoma along with them—an enslaved man caught between two peoples' suffering.

Les origines de « Swing Low, Sweet Chariot » plongent dans deux des plus grandes tragédies de l'Amérique. Le chant est attribué à Wallace Willis, un Afro-Américain réduit en esclavage par un membre de la Nation Choctaw. Lorsque les Choctaw furent déportés du Mississippi sur la Piste des Larmes, Willis fut emmené en Oklahoma avec eux.

Willis composed the song while working in cotton fields near the Red River, which reminded him of the River Jordan from the Bible and of the Prophet Elijah being carried to heaven by a chariot of fire. He and his daughter Minerva would sing together in the evenings outside their cabin at the Spencer Academy, a Choctaw boarding school.

Willis composa le chant en travaillant dans les champs de coton près de la Rivière Rouge, qui lui rappelait le Jourdain biblique et le prophète Élie emporté au ciel par un chariot de feu. Lui et sa fille Minerva chantaient ensemble le soir devant leur cabane à la Spencer Academy, une école pour enfants Choctaw.

A Scottish minister named Alexander Reid overheard their singing and was so moved that he transcribed the music. In 1871, he sent the songs to the Fisk Jubilee Singers at Fisk University in Nashville. This chorus of formerly enslaved students carried the song across America and Europe, making it one of the most famous spirituals ever sung.

Un pasteur écossais du nom d'Alexander Reid entendit leurs chants et en fut si touché qu'il transcrivit la musique. En 1871, il envoya les chansons aux Fisk Jubilee Singers de l'université Fisk à Nashville. Ce chœur d'anciens esclaves fit connaître le chant à travers l'Amérique et l'Europe.

"When one thinks of the two old slaves singing happily together at the door of their humble cabin... he cannot help perceiving how our Heavenly Father uses 'things that are weak' for the accomplishment of his gracious purposes."

« Quand on pense à ces deux vieux esclaves chantant joyeusement devant la porte de leur humble cabane... on ne peut s'empêcher de voir comment notre Père céleste utilise « les choses faibles » pour l'accomplissement de ses desseins. »

— Robert Flickinger, *The Choctaw Freedmen*, 1914

The song carried double meanings: the Jordan River symbolized the first step to freedom, "home" meant Africa or the free North, and the "band of angels" may have referred to Harriet Tubman and others on the Underground Railroad. In 2002, the Library of Congress added it to the National Recording Registry. In 1939, Nazi Germany banned it. Today it remains one of the most powerful anthems of faith and freedom ever written.

Le chant portait des significations cachées : le Jourdain symbolisait le premier pas vers la liberté, « chez moi »

Saint John Fisher Parish

Children's Songbook · Chansonnier des enfants · Cancionero de niños

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

African-American Spiritual · Attr. Wallace Willis · French translation included



Key: D Major | Time: 4/4 | Tempo: ♩ = 80 (Andante) | Chords: D · G · A7

Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan, and what did I see? Coming for to...

Verse 1 continues: A band of angels coming after me, / Coming for to carry me home.

Remaining verses follow the same melody:

V2: If you get there before I do, / Tell all my friends I'm coming too.

V3: I'm sometimes up and sometimes down, / But still my soul feels heavenly bound.

Each verse ends with "Coming for to carry me home" then returns to the chorus.

English

Chorus:

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Coming for to carry me home,
Swing low, sweet chariot,
Coming for to carry me home.

Verse 1:

I looked over Jordan, and what did I see?
Coming for to carry me home,
A band of angels coming after me,
Coming for to carry me home.

Verse 2:

If you get there before I do,
Coming for to carry me home,
Tell all my friends I'm coming too,
Coming for to carry me home.

Verse 3:

I'm sometimes up and sometimes down,
Coming for to carry me home,
But still my soul feels heavenly bound,
Coming for to carry me home.

Français

Refrain :

*Balance-toi doucement, doux chariot,
Viens me ramener chez moi,
Balance-toi doucement, doux chariot,
Viens me ramener chez moi.*

Couplet 1 :

*J'ai regardé par-delà le Jourdain, et qu'ai-je vu ?
Viens me ramener chez moi,
Une troupe d'anges qui venait vers moi,
Viens me ramener chez moi.*

Couplet 2 :

*Si tu arrives là-bas avant moi,
Viens me ramener chez moi,
Dis à tous mes amis que j'arrive aussi,
Viens me ramener chez moi.*

Couplet 3 :

*Parfois je suis en haut, parfois en bas,
Viens me ramener chez moi,
Mais mon âme se sent toujours liée au ciel,
Viens me ramener chez moi.*

♪ Sing with deep feeling. This is a call-and-response song—one voice sings the verse, all join on the chorus. ♪

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