



Shout Because You're Free

Art Rosenbaum

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The ring shout is the oldest known African American performance tradition surviving on the North American continent. Performed for the purpose of religious worship, this fusion of dance, song, and percussion survives today in the Bolton Community of McIntosh County, Georgia. Incorporating oral history, first-person accounts, musical transcriptions, photographs, and drawings, *Shout Because You're Free* documents a group of performers known as the McIntosh County Shouters.

Derived from African practices, the ring shout combines call-and-response singing, the percussion of a stick or broom on a wood floor, and hand-clapping and foot-tapping. First described in depth by outside observers on the sea islands of South Carolina and Georgia during the Civil War, the ring shout was presumed to have died out in active practice until 1980, when the shouters in the Bolton community first came to the public's attention.

Shout Because You're Free is the result of sixteen years of research and fieldwork by Art and Margo Rosenbaum, authors of *Folk Visions and Voices*. The book includes descriptions of present-day community shouts, a chapter on the history of the shout's African origins, the recollections of early outside observers, and later folklorists' comments. In addition, the tunes and texts of twenty-five shout songs performed by the McIntosh County Shouters are transcribed by ethnomusicologist Johann S. Buis. *Shout Because You're Free* is a fascinating look at a unique living tradition that demonstrates ties to Africa, slavery, and Emancipation while interweaving these influences with worship and oneness with the spirit.

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