

[Kirke Mechem](#) : Songs of the Slave

The work begins with new music to the text of John Brown's favorite hymn, "Blow Ye the Trumpet," a choral piece whose inspiring and solemn words prophesy both the day of jubilee and the martyr's death that Brown knew would hasten the destruction of slavery. The centerpiece of the suite is "Dan-u-el," a rousing piece in the rhythmic style of the black spiritual. Already published as an octavo, "Dan-u-el" has become one of the most acclaimed new American choral works, receiving worldwide performance.

In the suite's second movement, Douglass sings of the sorrows of the slave. In the fifth, he describes American slavery to an English audience, using all his powers of ridicule, pathos and mimicry. This leads directly into a finale that brings the cantata to a great climax, Douglass and the chorus singing a portion of the Declaration of Independence: "All men are created equal."

Mechem's compositions cover almost every genre, but vocal music is the core of his work. His three-act opera **Tartuffe** has been staged 300 times and performed in six countries. **Songs of the Slave** — a suite for bass-baritone, soprano, chorus, and orchestra from his opera **John Brown** — has toured to over 40 US cities. His extensive choral works have garnered him the title of "dean of American choral composers."

In 2008, Lyric Opera of Kansas City will premiere **John Brown**, a large-scale dramatic work inspired by the American abolitionist, to celebrate their 50th anniversary.
