

A British composer and conductor of African descent, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875–1912) was trained at the Royal Academy of Music in London as a violinist. From the beginning of his short career, his compositions showed an individuality that rapidly won him recognition and were soon followed with great interest. A folk element was predominant in his writing; Coleridge-Taylor, a cultivated gentleman with high aesthetic ideals, sought to immortalize the folk songs of his race by rendering them a new interpretation and added dignity.

Deep River is No. 10 of Coleridge-Taylor's original 1904 collection entitled *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*, Op. 59, in which the composer has transcribed and arranged for piano native songs of Africa, the West Indies and songs that came into being in the United States during the time of slavery. The composer wrote, "What Brahms has done for the Hungarian folk music, Dvorák for the Bohemian, and Grieg for the Norwegian, I have tried to do for these Negro melodies." *Deep River* is written in the form of theme and variations with the theme used as a motto that can be quickly recognized. Arpeggiated chords support the opening four-measure melody. The melody returns twice before reaching the climax, followed by a peaceful closing.

Deep River

Transcribed by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
Op. 59, No. 10

The musical score for "Deep River" is presented in three systems. The first system begins with a *Lento* tempo marking. The right hand starts with a four-measure melody, followed by a longer melodic phrase. The left hand provides accompaniment with arpeggiated chords. Dynamics include *pp* and *molto cantabile*. The second system continues the melodic development, with dynamics *pp* and *poco rit.*. The third system concludes the piece, featuring dynamics *mp*, *poco rit.*, *a tempo*, *f*, and *dim.*. The score is written for piano in 4/4 time with a key signature of three sharps.

In the author's opinion this is the most beautiful and touching melody of the whole series.