

[Il *refrain* è in forma di canzone A1 A2 B A3, con le sezioni A fortemente differenziate tra loro, che spingono la tessitura vocale sempre più verso l'acuto.]

JOE

A1:

Ol' Man River,
Dat Ol' Man River
He mus' know sumpin'
But don't say nuthin',
He jes' keeps rollin',
He keeps on rollin' along.

A2:

He don' plant taters,
He don' plant cotton,
An' dem dat plants 'em
Is soon forgotten,
But Ol' Man River,
He jes' keeps rollin' along.

B [ricavato dalla frase delle *gals* della scena iniziale]:

You an' me, we sweat an strain,
Body all achin' an' racked wid pain -
Tote dat barge!
Lift dat bale!
Git a little drunk,
An' you land in jail...

A3:

Ah gits weary
An' sick of tryin';
Ah'm tired of livin'
An' skeered of dyin',
But Ol' Man River,
He jes' keeps rollin' along.

(BARGE MEN enter, pulling rope, during the following verse. The curtains close in, leaving JOE and MALE CHORUS in front, in one)

[Il *verse* è ricavato dalla scena iniziale dell'opera]:

Niggers all work on de Mississippi
Niggers all work while de white folks play,
Pullin' dem boats from de dawn to sunset,
Gittin' no rest till de Judgement Day.

MEN

Don' look up
An' don' look down
You don' dast make
De white boss frown.
Bend your knees

An' bow your head,
An' pull dat rope
Until yo' dead.

JOE

Let me go 'way from the Mississippi
Let me go 'way from de white man boss;
Show me dat stream called de river Jordan,
Dat's de ol' stream dat I long to cross.

[ripresa del *refrain*]

MEN

Ol' Man River,
Dat Ol' Man River,
He mus' know sumpin'
But don't say nuthin',
He jes' keeps rollin',
He keeps on rollin' along.

JOE

Long ol' river forever keeps rollin' on...

MEN

He don' plant taters,
He don' plant cotton,
An' dem dat plants 'em
Is soon forgotten,
But Ol' Man River,
He jes' keeps rollin' along.

JOE

Long ol' river keeps hearing dat song.

You an' me, we sweat an' strain,
Body all achin' and racked wid pain -
Tote dat barge!

Lift dat bale!

Git a little drunk

An' you land in jail...

JOE & MEN

Ah gits weary
An' sick of tryin';
Ah'm tired of livin'
An' skeered of dyin',
But Ol' Man River,
He jes' keeps rollin' along!