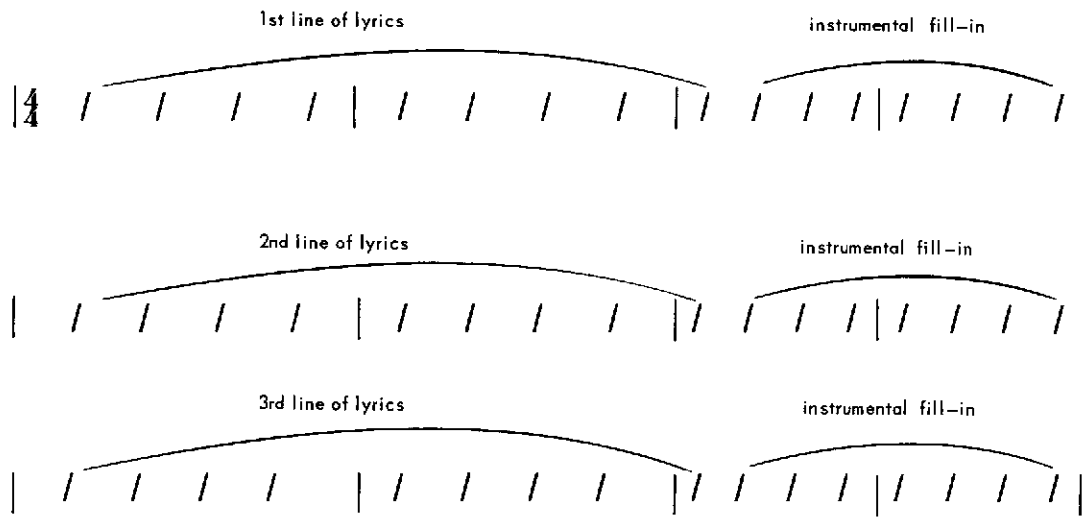


The blues

Example 12A

The usual format showing fill-in areas:



Example 12B

instrumental fill-in

The blues a-round me if it's night or day

U / U / U / U /

instrumental fill-in

The blues a-round me if it's night or day

U / U / U / U /

instrumental fill-in

Un-less you love me they won't go a-way.

U / U / U / U /

*Iambic pentameter markings.

listens to the recordings available, it is easy to feel the deep emotion her ability to communicate caused. Her repertoire was quite varied, and her personal feelings show on her recordings—sometimes very sad, other times happy and full of humor.

By the end of her first recording year, 1923, Bessie sold over two million records, and by 1927, four million Bessie Smith records were sold. She recorded 160 songs and literally saved the Columbia Record Company from bankruptcy at that time. Bessie Smith also made a movie short—quite a breakthrough for a black singer whose market was pri-

marily ethnic. She earned a great deal of money and spent a great deal. By 1930, public interest in her began to fade—some say because she would not adjust to more modern song material. But in listening to the Bessie Smith records, one can feel that the blues was very personal to her, and she sang these songs with great sincerity.¹⁴ She died penniless in 1937 as a result of an automobile accident. At the

14. Bessie Smith, *Empty Bed Blues*, Columbia Records, G30450; *The Empress*, Columbia Records, G30818; *The Bessie Smith Story*, Columbia Records, CI 855.