



Price, Perry, Smith-Moore: African-American Women Composers of Symphonic

Introduction Day

Anton Dvorak



Symphony No. 9 "From the New World"

- Czech composer from the 19th century visits America
- Introduced to spirituals by black man Harry Burleigh
- "the the future of this country must be founded on Negro melodies."
- Quotes a line from "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" in second movement of symphony

What is a Symphony?

- Orchestra - A symphony orchestra is the largest type of orchestra and is composed of strings, brass, woodwinds, and percussion.
- Form - Traditional Symphonies contain 4 movements (allegro, andante, a minuet and trio of dance suites or scherzo, and a finale) at least one of which uses sonata form.
- Symphonic music lives under the umbrella of the classical tradition

What are Black Idioms in Music?

- Musical idioms, in general, are a form of language and can provide history cum cultural process
- A Black Idiom in Music is a way to recognize the influence of African or African American music on a genre
- In this course, we will classify Black Idioms in two categories:
 - Rhythm: polyrhythms, offbeat, phrasing of melodic accents, interlocking, rhythms, multiple main beats, cross, rhythms, shifting meters, rhythms from African American dances, etc
 - Melody: solo and chorus, alternations, the blue note, the blues scale, pentatonic, scale, solo chorus, alternations with ostinato, accompaniment, etc.

Price, Perry, Moore

Florence Price -
1887 to 1953



Undine Smith Moore -
1904 to 1989



Julia Perry -
1924 to 1979



Price, Perry, Smith-Moore:
African-American Women Composers of Symphonic

Day 2 - Florence Price





Recap

Key Definitions & People

Symphony Orchestra

Anton Dvorak

Symphonic Form

Harry Barleigh

Black Idioms in *Music*

Symphony No. 9 : From the New World



Influences On the Artist

Social Time

Politics

Personal Identity

Race

Gender

Culture

Regional Influence

Region

State

City





Florence Price

1887 to 1953

Key Facts

- Was 6 years old growing up in Little Rock, Arkansas when Anton Dvorak's "Symphony No. 9" premiered in NYC 1893 and relocated to Chicago around the age of 33
- Father was a free-born dentist from Delaware and Mother was a housewife and Florence's first music teacher
- Florence was the first black female composer to a composition played by a Major orchestra (Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933)
- Florence was the first black female composer to be recognized as a symphonic composer

Social Timeline - Price

1863 - Emancipation Proclamation

1893 - Dvorak's "Symphony No. 9" premieres in NYC
Price was 6 years old

1930s - Great Depression, Dust Bowls, President Roosevelt and His Federal Music Project

1939 - World War II begins draining the federal funding Price was relying on for her commissions for the Federal Music Project

1944 - D Day

Personal Timeline - Price

1887 - Born in Little Rock, Arkansas

1903 - Attends New England Conservatory as Mexican

1912 - Marries Arkansas Attorney Thomas J Price after heading Music Dept at Clark Atlanta in Georgia

1920s - Moves with family to Chicago due to a lynching in Little Rock
Price was around 33 years old

1933 - Symphony in E minor was premiered at the World's Fair 1933 by Chicago Symphony Orchestra
Price was around 46 years old

1940 - inducted into the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers for her work as a composer
Price was around 53 years old

1953 - Died of a stroke in Chicago
Price was around 66 years old

A watercolor illustration featuring a stack of books on the left side. The books have various colored spines, including green, red, and brown. Green foliage with small white flowers is scattered around the books and in the corners of the image. The background is a light green wash with faint, larger-scale green foliage patterns.

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Day 3 - Undine Smith-Moore



Recap

Key Notes on Florence Price

Relied on Funding from the Federal Music Project, which dried up during WWII

Passed as Mexican in College to Avoid a Type of Racism

Quickly Moved Family from Little Rock, AK to Chicago, IL for Fear of Daughters
Being Lynched

Was Divorced and Quickly Re-Married Within A Month Around the Composition of Symphony in
E Minor



Undine Smith Moore

1904 to 1989

Key Facts

- Was around 30 years old, working as a professor of music at Virginia State College when Florence Price's "Symphony in E Minor" premiered.
- Father was one of two brakemen who worked on the Norfolk and Western Railroad. Not much is known about her mother except that she helped foster a love of music and literature.
- Was the first to ever receive a scholarship from Juilliard to study music at Fisk University in Nashville, TN.
- Known as "the Dean of Black Women Composers" she composed over a 100 works, 26 of which were published, more than half of which are choral.



Undine Smith Moore

1904 to 1989

Key Facts

- Co-founded The Black Music Center at Virginia State College, a center that disseminated information about the black contribution to music and the world
- Dedicated many years as a prominent member of the music faculty at Virginia State College between 1924 and 1972 when she retired.
- Received several honorary doctorates and achievement awards from prestigious institutions and associations for both her contributions as a composer and her contributions as an educator.
- At almost 80 years old, she composed "Scenes from The Life of a Martyr" in 1981 , which got her nominated for a Pulitzer Prize

Social Timeline - Smith Moore

1893 - Dvorak's
"Symphony No. 9"
premieres in NYC

1918 - 1935
Harlem Renaissance

The Great
Depression

World War II

1954 - 1975
Civil Rights Movement

1965 - 1975
Black Arts Movement

Personal Timeline - Smith Moore

1904 - Born in
Jarratt, Virginia

1908 - Family
relocates to
Petersburg, VA
where Undine
gets piano
lessons

1924 - 1926
Receives
scholarship from
Juilliard to
attend Fisk
University &
graduates cum
laude in Piano
Performance

1929 - 1931
Studies at Columbia
University's Teachers
College to complete
both a M.A. and a
professional diploma
with composition
teacher Howard
Murphy
Undine was around
27 years old

1938 - Undine
resumes work at
Virginia State
College and marries
the Chair of
Physical Ed, Dr.
James Arthur
Moore
Undine was around
34 years old

1940s - Gave
birth to
daughter and
focused on
composing
choral pieces for
work at Virginia
State College
and their choir

1950s - Resumes
studying with
composition
teacher Howard
Murphy in NYC
and composes
more piano
pieces, choral
pieces.

1960s -
Husband Dr
James Arthur
Moore dies &
Undine co-
founds the Black
Music Center at
Virginia State
College

1970s - Undine
has an extended
trip in West
Africa,
composes more
pieces, receiving
many honoraries
degrees &
achievement
awards

1981 - Scenes
from the Life of
a Martyr was
completed,
published,
premiered, &
nominated for a
Pulitzer Prize

1989 - Died
of a stroke
in
Petersburg,
VA
Undine was 84
years old

A watercolor illustration featuring a stack of books on the left side. The books have various colored spines, including green, red, and brown. To the right of the books is a large, elegant cursive title. The background is a soft, light green wash. Green foliage with small white flowers is illustrated in the top right and bottom right corners.

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Day 4 - Julia Perry



Recap

Key Notes on Undine Smith-Moore

- Was really passionate about educating others on the history of black contributions to music and the world
- Believed strongly that education on black music should start in grade school and that the music itself should not be taught, analyzed, or evaluated the way that European traditions were taught by pointing back to 'the greats.'
- Defined black music as 'music written by a black man.'
- Co-founded the Black Music Center at Virginia State College where she designed and taught a renowned 3 credit course on black music history that was offered to graduate & undergraduate students.



Compare & Contrast

How were Price & Smith-Moore Different?



Musical Style

Local Social Environment

US Social Climate

Audience Reception



Julia Perry

1924 to 1979

Key Facts

- Was about 9 years old growing up in Lexington, KY when Florence Price's "Symphony in E Minor" premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the World's Fair.
- Father was a well-spoken physician and Mother was a school teacher.
- Her piece *Stabat Mater*, which premiered in Tanglewood in Massachusetts in the 1950s, brought her national critical acclaim.
- Was honored for *Stabat Mater* but struggled to maintain commissions as her health began to decline.

Social Timeline - Perry

1918 - 1935
Harlem Renaissance

The Great
Depression

World War II

1954 - 1975
Civil Rights Movement

1965 - 1975
Black Arts Movement

Personal Timeline - Perry

1924 - Born in Lexington,
KY

1934 - Moves to
Akron, Ohio with
family

1940s - Attends
University of Akron,
with full scholarship to
the Westminster
Choir College to
achieve both a B.M.
and M.M. degrees,
composing a lot.
Perry was in her early 20s

1949 - Studied
choral conducting at
Berkshire Music
Festival in
Tanglewood; won
the Marian
Anderson Award in
NYC
Perry was in her 30s

1950s - Studied
composition with
various instructors in
America, Italy,
France, and Austria,
composing,
publishing and
premiering various
pieces in these
places including her
infamous "Stabat
Mater"

1960s - Returned to
America
permanently,
continuing
composing various
pieces while
teaching private
piano lessons
independently and
at Akron
Conservatory of
Music

1970s - Health issues begin while
Perry continues to teach and
compose, submitting works to no
avail to various composers
Perry was in her early 50s

1979 - Died of a heart attack in
Chicago
Perry was around 55 years old

A watercolor illustration featuring a stack of books on the left side. The books have various colored spines, including green, red, and brown. To the right of the books and extending towards the top right corner is a branch with green leaves and small white flowers. The background is a light green wash with faint, larger-scale floral patterns.

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Day 5 - The Future of Black
Female Symphonic Composers



Recap

Key Notes on Julia Perry

Experienced Private Lessons in Paris and composition study at the Academia Chigiana in Sienna during the summers of 1954 and 1956

Awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship twice in 1954 and 1956

Her music was revived in 2020 by Akron Symphony Orchestra

Her Style was Neoclassic, dissonant, with serial techniques typical of 20th century international style, infused with intense, dark lyricism. International Mainstream avant-garde.



Compare & Contrast

How were Price & Smith-Moore Different from Julia Perry?

Musical Style

Local Social Environment

US Social Climate

Audience Reception

Today



Allison Loggins-Hull

“Can You See?”

(Daniel R. Lewis Composer
Fellowship w/Cleveland Orchestra)



Courtney Bryan

“Yet Unheard”

(MacArthur Genius Award, La
Jolla Symphony Orchestra)

The background is a light green watercolor wash. In the corners, there are decorative illustrations of leafy branches. The top-left and bottom-right corners feature green leaves, while the top-right and bottom-left corners feature branches with both green and brownish-orange leaves.

Conclusion

The future of African American Women
Composers of Symphonic Music is bright!



Thank You