

The Aesthetics of Florence Price:
Negotiating the Dissonances of a New World Nationalism

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Abstract

As an African-American woman, Florence Price (1887–1953) embodied the antithesis of Eurocentric American creative thought in the first half of the twentieth century. As a practitioner who synthesized black musical idioms and classical conventions in pursuit of a distinctly American school of music, her compositional voice clashed against an aesthetic that rendered whiteness and maleness as the absolute signifiers of citizenship and, therefore, a national school. Price had little choice but to negotiate the dissonances of race and gender and, as a result, these negotiations are inherent in her compositional outlook and performance contexts.

“The Aesthetics of Florence Price: Negotiating the Dissonances of a New World Nationalism” presents a historical narrative that foregrounds the junctions at which Price’s artistic, intellectual, and cultural callings converged. Focusing on the formative years and key works that led to Price’s national recognition as a composer, I largely engage her life and musical activity after her 1927 arrival in Chicago. Through the lens of a pianist, I present an analysis and interpretation that theorizes Price’s negotiations of cultural dissonances in the score and I suggest possibilities for realization in performance. This culminates in a study that examines the path to Price’s resolution of Old and New World ideals amid African retentions in her aesthetic.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged in the footnotes and bibliography. Price's scores are reprinted here for academic purposes only, with permission from G. Schirmer, Inc. The Century of Progress program is reprinted here for academic purposes only, with permission from the Rosenthal Archives, Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Two publications have emerged from this thesis. The first is "Florence Price and the Politics of her Existence," *Kapralova Society Journal: A Journal of Women in Music* 16 (2018): 1–10. This article is duplicated in parts of the dissertation and can be found in its entirety in the *Kapralova Society Journal*. The second is the forthcoming "Composing a Symphonist: Florence Price and the Hand of Black Women's Fellowship," *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 24 (2020).

Chapter One

Introduction

I have an unwavering and compelling faith that a national music very beautiful and very American can come from the melting pot just as the nation itself has done.

Florence Price
Letter to Serge Koussevitzky
July 5, 1943

The aesthetics of Florence Price (1887–1953) are an amalgamation of histories within histories. To speak of the bifurcated influences of an African-derived folkloric heritage and a Western European classical tradition is to merely touch upon the surface of the kaleidoscopic and intersecting legacies at the heart of Price’s craft. Behind her compositions lie a host of musical enterprises that spurred varying ideals for a New World nationalism. These enterprises encompassed the early efforts of nineteenth-century ethnomusicologists to transcribe black folk songs and the later concertization and commercialization of the folk tradition.¹ They extended to the endeavors of nineteenth-century composers in the United States to distinguish a national symphonic voice.² Further still, they included the triumphs of twentieth-century composers of African descent who claimed this voice through the materials and manifestations of black folkloric traditions.

Race, gender, and citizenship always defined notions of a New World nationalism. However, its rightful purveyors were assumed to simultaneously embody whiteness, maleness, and American-ness. These assumptions traversed the classical music realm as ideas about an American school began to emerge in the nineteenth century. Douglas Shadle

¹ Sandra Jean Graham unveils the transformation of the spirituals through detailing the folk, concertized, and commercial manifestations of the genre across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See Sandra Jean Graham, *Spirituals and the Birth of a Black Entertainment Industry* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

² Douglas Shadle delves into the cultivation of a white American symphonic voice and the search for indigeneity within an imperial context. See Douglas Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

concludes that “[t]he story of the nineteenth-century American symphonic enterprise was like a winter that never turned into spring ... the icy chill was the selective amnesia brought on by diverse ideological agendas—from the rejection of works that did not appear to be symphonies to the denial of any national identity at all.”³ African-American women were not even a part of this conversation: in the pull between the cosmopolitan school that favored “technical mastery ... European forms and ... principles” and the provincial school that downplayed the traits of its adversary and prized “originality, experimentation, eclecticism, and an absence of self-consciousness,” whiteness, maleness, and American-ness appeared to define both ends of the spectrum.⁴ It was widely believed that “women were incapable of composing in larger forms”⁵—and by women, I infer from contemporary socio-cultural constructs of womanhood and femininity, were meant white women. The possibilities and potentials of non-white women were negated entirely. As Teresa L. Reed observes, “misconceptions about the intelligence of (white) women and African Americans created a virtually insurmountable barrier for any black woman aspiring toward ‘serious’ composition in the 1800s. In the twentieth century, this barrier would succumb to Florence Price, the first black female composer of distinction.”⁶

The twentieth century reproduced the connotations of a New World nationalism with specific constructions of race, gender, and citizenship at its core; but where did Price’s aesthetics abide amid the push and pull of the cosmopolitan and provincial? How did Price, clashing with the expectations of whiteness and maleness in her American-ness, negotiate

³ Ibid., 15.

⁴ Richard Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape: The Business of Musicianship from Billings to Gershwin*, updated edition (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 7.

⁵ Shadle, 11.

⁶ Teresa L. Reed, “Black Women in Art Music,” *Black Women and Music: More Than the Blues*, eds. Eileen Hayes and Linda F. Williams (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 190.

notions of a New World nationalism that were historically constructed and contemporarily perpetuated to render her identity as dissonant therein? Though Price did not exclusively work with black musical idioms, what did it mean for her to root so many of her works (especially the large-scale accomplishments) in an African-American folkloric heritage? Were there other social contexts and cultural conversations beyond the white male-authored discourse in which to situate her aesthetic? My dissertation unfolds from these converging inquiries. I begin by listening.

Historicizing listening

“When will we listen to black women?” opens Alisha Lola Jones’ essay on Price and her soundings of black sisterhood.⁷ *When*, I reiterate, and *how*? Delving deeper into Price’s use of a black musical idiom—i.e., a racialized musical language—requires us to engage in the metacognitive act of listening to how we listen. My exploration into Price’s integrated compositional approach against the dissonances cast by dominant listening practices strives toward decolonized hearings and rehearings of her aesthetic. In order to hear how Price resolved the musical language of an African-American folk heritage in a Western European classical tradition, I listen to why and where dissonances may have been perceived in the first place. Both the resolutions of Price’s integrated aesthetic and the dissonances that echoed the norms of segregation were a product of their racial climate. The goal toward resolution exemplified racial uplift ideology. The transformation of vernacular traditions into a recognized art form thereby became a metaphor for the transformation of the race, from the

⁷ Alisha Lola Jones, “Lift Every Voice: Marian Anderson, Florence B. Price and the Sound of Black Sisterhood,” *NPR*, August 30, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/08/30/748757267/lift-every-voice-marian-anderson-florence-b-price-and-the-sound-of-black-sisterh>.

dehumanizing thralls of slavery to the re-humanizing ambitions of freemen and women.⁸ The hearing of dissonances, however, resonated with the visual signifiers of racial supremacist ideology, wherein whiteness was constructed to represent the pinnacle of power, privilege, and purity, and placed in diametrical opposition to blackness.⁹ A closer look into the distinct cultural meanings behind the resolutions and dissonances not only seeks to establish the notions of a black musical idiom that Price may have embraced, but also the notions that she would have most likely rejected.

During the post-bellum era, emergent literature on African-American folk music acknowledged certain idiomatic qualities in the early forms of music-making. Lucy McKim Garrison, one of the three white Harvard-educated and classically trained editors of *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867), expressed the challenges of documenting these qualities within the confines of Western notation. She wrote, “it is difficult ... to express the entire character of these negro ballads by mere musical notes and signs. The odd turns made in the throat, and the curious rhythmic effect produced by single voices chiming in at different irregular intervals, seem almost as impossible to place on the score as the singing of birds or the tones of an Æolian Harp.”¹⁰ Her hearings of black voices carried the Other-ing undertones of exotification. From a historiographical perspective, however, her hearings of black voices help reify what the aural denotations and connotations of an early black musical idiom were and how the idiom was chronicled.

Garrison’s reflections located the idiom in the declamations of the voice. James Monroe Trotter’s *Music and Some Highly Musical People* (1878) reiterated this

⁸ Lawrence Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music, 1878–1943* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 7.

⁹ Jennifer Stoeber, *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 21.

¹⁰ William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware and Lucy McKim Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: A. Simpson & Co., 1867), vi.

understanding. Trotter, the child of a white slave master and black slave, was one of the earliest African-American music historians. In his 1878 contribution, he referenced the modality of spiritual melodies when he ascribed “the habitually minor character of its tones to the depression of feeling, the anguish, that must ever fill the hearts of those who are forced to lead a life so fraught with woe.”¹¹ Marshall W. Taylor, born a freeman, unlike his parents, wrote of the melodic voice along similar themes in his preface to *A Collection of Revival Hymns and Plantation Melodies* (1882). He proclaimed: “every line in these melodies breathes a prayer for liberty, physical and spiritual.”¹² White music critic Henry Edward Krehbiel went so far as to analyze the melodic structure and modal character of 527 traditional songs in his *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial National Music* (1914).¹³

Notions of a black musical idiom emerged in the way composers of African descent spoke about either their own aesthetic or the craft of their peers and predecessors. Henry “Harry” T. Burleigh (1866–1949) also located aspects of this idiom along melodic lines. Discussing the musical intent behind his Negro Spiritual arrangements, Burleigh explained: “[m]y desire was to preserve them in harmonies that belong to modern methods of tonal progression without robbing the melodies of their racial flavor.”¹⁴ Margaret Bonds (1913–1972) spelled out the ingredients of a racial flavor in relation to Burleigh’s craft, making direct reference to the idiomatic character of the melody in his “Ethiopia Saluting the Colors”: “the melody of the song is in the minor mode, and although Burleigh did not actually use a spiritual melody, the idiom is unmistakably Negroid—simple, minor and

¹¹ James Monroe Trotter, *Music and Some Highly Musical People* (Boston: Lee and Shepard Publishers, 1878), 258.

¹² Marshall W. Taylor, *A Collection of Revival Hymns and Plantation Melodies* (Cincinnati: Marshall W. Taylor and W. C. Echols, Publishers, 1882), 3.

¹³ Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1914), 43.

¹⁴ *New York World*, October 25, 1924, quoted in Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 271.

syncopated.”¹⁵ The commentary of Burleigh and Bonds suggests a consensus on what the idiom represented both musically and semantically and, in doing so, contextualizes the idiom in a wider artistic movement pioneered by black composers from the first half of the twentieth century.

Warner Lawson, who served as the Dean of the School of Music at Howard University from 1942 to 1971, celebrated this artistic movement in an article that highlighted those who drew upon this idiom in large-scale composition and led its expression to new creative heights. Cogitating on the roles of black composers in classical music, Lawson wrote of Price and her contemporaries, “Negro musicians in the last ten years have made a vigorous contribution to music based on the Negro idiom. William Grant Still, William Dawson, and Florence B. Price and R. Nathaniel Dett are clearly harbingers of a new idiomatic expression in the larger forms, that is essentially indigenous in character.”¹⁶ Lawson’s reference to the indigenous underpinnings of this new idiomatic expression grounded the compositions of Still, Dawson, Price and Dett in the influence of the vernacular.

This vernacular music contained and carried the cultural codes of New World survival: it was an affirmation of the Self. But in a society conditioned by white supremacy to condemn the value and distort the meaning of a black racialized musical language, African-American folk music was also a marker of the Other. For instance, *Slave Songs of the United States* is a monumental body of work that sought to uplift the history of African-American music; the study inspired successive ethnographic investigations that, in turn, paved the way for the concert spiritual arrangements that shaped the creative output of Black Renaissance

¹⁵ Margaret Bonds, “A Reminiscence,” *International Library of Negro Life and History: The Negro in Music and Art*, ed. Lindsay Patterson (New York: Publishers Company, Inc., 1967), 191.

¹⁶ Warner Lawson, “Negroes in the Music World,” *Chicago Defender*, December 19, 1942, 25.

composers.¹⁷ Still, despite the importance of *Slave Songs*, editors William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Garrison were not immune to the cultural dictates of how blackness was typically seen. As Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr. observes, “these authors believed, for example, that the beauty of the songs in their collection provided evidence that Negroes held the potential to become more like the ‘cultivated race.’”¹⁸ These beliefs were grounded in the Eurocentric thinking of their time but still evidenced attempts to resist the disparagement of African-American traditions. Nonetheless, Eurocentric standards permeated and politicized listening experiences. These standards maintained the condescension or, at worst, the utter derogation of African-American people and traditions. They forged the cultural dictates of how black identities were typically heard, not just seen. If Other-ing propaganda around black bodies was a construct of the white imagination, i.e., an audiovisual medium, it is of little surprise that sonic (mis)conceptions of race could abide within.

Matthew D. Morrison neologizes the term “Blacksound” to depict the inextricability of sound and body in African-American cultural production, particularly in “the history of popular music in the United States.”¹⁹ Morrison’s theory of Blacksound in popular music culture intersects with the hearing of black musical idioms in classical contexts, as racialized sounds were as much tied to the development of concert spirituals as they were to blackface minstrelsy (and the entertainment forms they inspired).²⁰ Racialized sounds, Morrison explicates, “are central to how ideals of citizenship vis-à-vis whiteness developed along the

¹⁷ Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr., “Cosmopolitan or Provincial?: Ideology in Early Black Music Historiography, 1867–1940,” *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (1996): 19.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Matthew D. Morrison, “The sound(s) of subjection: Constructing American popular music and racial identity through Blacksound,” *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, DOI: 10.1080/0740770X.2017.1282120 (2017): 6. See also Matthew D. Morrison, “Race, Blacksound, and the (Re)Making of Musicological Discourse,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72, no. 3 (2019): 78–823.

²⁰ Morrison, “The sound(s) of subjection,” 6.

sonic color line” from the nineteenth century to the present day.²¹ Morrison references Jennifer Stoever’s “sonic color line”: “an interpretive site where racial difference is echoed, produced and policed through the ear.”²² The sonic color line depicts “the process of racializing sound—how and why certain bodies are expected to produce, desire, and live amongst particular sounds—and its product, the hierarchical division sounded between ‘whiteness’ and ‘blackness.’”²³

The sonic color line makes audible the image of the “unidentifiable” and “unassimilable” black Other of Frantz Fanon’s characterization.²⁴ It mutes and unhears any aspects of a black musical sound that would humanize its craft and render it identifiable and assimilable. It mishears its music as noise—not, as Stoever differentiates, in relation to the scientific measurement of loudness, but in the sense of the subjective, capricious and Eurocentric measurements of a racialized aurality, ever calibrating and re-calibrating to mark black sounds as “incomprehensible and unintelligible noise.”²⁵ These unhearings and mishearings are what made Antonín Dvořák’s vision for an American school of music founded upon African-American folk traditions so radical and dissonant in certain circles.

Along the sonic color line, the hierarchical division of white and black devalues the sounds of African-American cultural production. As a result, the black musical idiom is fixed in an antonymic relationship with European aesthetics. However, in an interpretative site that accommodates the pluralism of black identity and the power of black agency, the black musical idiom is valued and revalued primarily by its producers, or those who seek to honor its producers. Its definition is nuanced and mobilized by dynamic relationships between the

²¹ Ibid.

²² Stoever, “The Contours of the Sonic Color-Line: Slavery, Segregation, and the Cultural Politics of Listening,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2007), vii.

²³ Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line*, 7.

²⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 124.

²⁵ Stoever, “The Contours of the Sonic Color-Line,” 20–21.

art, artist, and audience that centre racial identity, minimizing the subtext of Other. The black musical idiom is further nuanced and mobilized by its inner interactivity, that is, the non-hierarchized interactions within the idiom between its many influences—its histories within histories. These interactions challenge what Stoever describes as “the sonic color line’s socially and historically contingent aural value systems” because these systems reject the very idea of non-hierarchized interactivity.²⁶ It is within this interpretive site that Price engages a black musical idiom.

New World narratives and experiences, as perceived through the white lens, failed to fully reconcile the contributions of New World identities that did not fit the prescribed visual. As an inevitable corollary, these narratives and experiences struggled to place New World idioms whose sounding presence confounded the sonic color line. The nineteenth century provides fertile ground for comparative study, as shown in Stoever’s exploration of opera singers Jenny Lind (1820–1887) whose body, sound, and sobriquet—the Swedish Nightingale—aligned perfectly with propagandized projections of racial purity and white supremacy; and Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield (c.1820–1876), whose body, sound, and sobriquet—the Black Swan—clashed heavily with the sonic color line and threatened the cultural codes at the heart of its construction. Stoever explains how white and black audiences strived to resolve Greenfield’s body with her sound and how the politics of contemporary listening practices drove the critique. Summarizing the current of white criticism, she writes, “certain that their eyes were deceived or their ears were playing tricks, many white reviewers either ‘whitened’ Greenfield’s voice—disembodying it and locating it firmly in Lind’s style and tradition—or ‘blackened’ its sound to match the cultural meanings her visible body represented.”²⁷ The perceived dissonance emanating from the sound and

²⁶ Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line*, 45.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 79

sight of Greenfield was perpetuated by what Stoever calls “the listening ear,” which is a key driver of the sonic color line and “a figure for how dominant listening practices accrue—and change—over time, as well as a descriptor for how the dominant culture exerts pressure on individual listening practices to conform to the sonic color line’s norms.”²⁸ The counter-current of black criticism sought to engage beyond the limitations of the listening ear and etch interpretive sites outside of the sonic color line. As Stoever notes, “for many free black antebellum subjects, hearing Greenfield’s voice—whether in person or in print—worked to decolonize listening and create alternate experiences of blackness away from and in resistance to the listening ear.”²⁹

The sonic color line and, by extension, the listening ear heavily shaped mainstream expectations around African-American performance and composition. As performers pioneering the concert spiritual, the Fisk Jubilee Singers interacted with the conventions of concert culture and challenged the limitations imposed by the color line with performances that engendered new aural and visual contexts for the cultural codes of black musical expression.³⁰ Wrapped in the visual of their attire—i.e., “Victorian finery”—and defined by the aural quality of their vocals—i.e., spirituals sung “in a muted pianissimo”—the Fisk Jubilee Singers presented audiovisuals of black identities that were discordant with the dominant hearings and viewings of black bodies in the age of blackface minstrelsy.³¹ Quoting Stoever and the work of Alexander Weheliye, “the Jubilee Singers audiovisually performed what Alexander Weheliye dubs ‘sonic afro-modernity,’ where sound offers ‘more flexible and future-directed provenances’ through which black subjects understand themselves and (re)negotiate their participation in Western modernity.”³² Critics were “completely disarmed

²⁸ Ibid., 7.

²⁹ Ibid., 79.

³⁰ Graham, *Spirituals and the Birth of a Black Entertainment Industry*, 17–47.

³¹ Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line*, 133.

³² Ibid., 25.

in their presence,”³³ according to Theodore Frelinghuysen Seward whose commission to transcribe the repertoire of the Fisk Jubilee Singers resulted in the 1872 publication of *Jubilee Songs: As Sung by the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University*.³⁴ Their disarming description not only alludes to the idea of the Fisk Jubilee Singers resisting the sonic color line’s definitions of African-American performance, but it also conjures up a sense of them drawing audiences out of the confines of an uncompromising black-and-white (or black *versus* white) listening space. And in refusing to perform in venues that limited black patrons to certain portions of the audience space, the Fisk Jubilee Singers enacted desegregation on both cognitive and physical levels.³⁵

However, the spirituals’ slavery connotations in an Emancipation-era United States presented a double-edged sword with one side defending racial pride and uplift and the other battling white condescension and expectation. As Sandra Jean Graham observes, “slavery gave the spirituals the stamp of authority, and it became the primary marketing strategy [for the Fisk Jubilee Singers], even though some of the students had been born free.”³⁶ The slave narrative thus worked its way into the expectations of white audiences in performances of the concert spiritual. R. Nathaniel Dett experienced a clash with expectations on April 22, 1915 at a concert where he directed the Hampton Choral Union in performances of arranged spirituals. Dett recalled the disappointment of white audience members who had hoped to see the spirituals accompanied by “swaying, hand-clapping and foot-patting”—features that were typical of the early folk spiritual but not of the later concertized genre.³⁷ Jon Michael Spencer

³³ Trotter, *Music and Some Highly Musical People*, 259.

³⁴ Kathleen A. Abromeit, *Spirituals: A Multidisciplinary Bibliography for Research and Performance* (Middleton: A-R Editions, Inc., 2015), 104.

³⁵ Graham, 47.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 74

³⁷ Jon Michael Spencer, *The New Negroes and Their Music: The Success of Harlem* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 39.

writes that Dett's experience at this concert "was a regular part of the music criticism [he] and the other Renaissance Negroes had to endure for at least another four decades."³⁸

Harlem Renaissance composer William Grant Still acknowledged that "it is true that some people incline to 'stereotype' a Negro composer, expecting him to follow certain lines, for no sounder reason than that those lines were followed in the past."³⁹ African-American composers of this time were aware that the absence of certain black performative codes could potentially make their work less endearing to white audiences, particularly if displaced by more European conventions. Black composers of classical music straddled the pressures of the past and the demands of the present. They were also caught in assumptions that they should align to the jazz and popular music trends of the day. Price was confronted by these contemporary assumptions and took great offense when AMI uninvitedly adapted her piano solo manuscripts for jazz orchestra:

I don't think AMI can hide their changes, omissions, insertions and other assaults upon my manuscripts by saying the contract gives them the right to do so because of a clause pertaining to "arrangements." The Musical Dictionary—one of the volumes comprising *The American History and Encyclopaedia of Music* defines the word "arrangement" thus: The adaptation of music for some other instrument or voice, or for some purpose for which it was not originally intended. Orchestral scores are frequently arranged for piano, piano duets as solos, or a separate composition as an overture or incorporated in a larger work, such as an opera or vice versa.

I am now convinced their purpose is not to promote my work as it was in the form in which they accepted it—piano solos—but to change it into jazz (of an inferior sort as evidenced by the harmonic and other changes they have already made in the manuscripts) for the use of jazz orchestras.⁴⁰

The aesthetics of Florence Price are steeped in the reality that the practice of listening is not an objective sensory act in the slightest. It is a deeply layered and highly politicized experience that has, both historically and presently, impacted hearings and rehearsals, as well

³⁸ Ibid., 40.

³⁹ Quoted in Spencer, 73.

⁴⁰ Correspondence, 1929–1953, Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a Series I, Box 1, Folder 12), Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

as mishearings and unhearings of African-American voices.⁴¹ These are the factors that made Price's engagement of a black musical idiom in the classical tradition both controversial and clashing. With the classical tradition having been racialized white, gendered male, and classed in the upper societal echelons, Price's compositional voice requires a framework that does not echo the listening practices of a tradition prone to mishearings and unhearings of Other-ed voices. If musical study is to be understood as an extension of listening practices, then the study of Price's aesthetic must listen to the ways in which Morrison's and Stoever's research resonates with an exploration of Price's employment of a racialized musical language. Price's aesthetic resists the sonic color line, meaning its study must too. Thus, I explore Price's use of black vernacular traditions in a space where it is neither disembodied from Price to fit exclusionary New World perpetuations of the classical tradition, nor embodied in Price (à la Greenfield) to cement it in the Other-ing approaches to blackness and woman-ness. Her works necessitate hearings and rehearings that emanate from decolonized audiovisual spaces. It is from here that my listening proceeds.

Performance as a listening methodology

How will we listen to black women? I use performance to explore questions concerning the socio-cultural facets of the Price narrative, such as how the intersections of race, gender, and citizenship shaped the performance histories of her work and continue to affect the programming of her music today. I also use performance to enhance musical analysis, particularly when seeking to better interpret and articulate Price's approach to vernacular tropes, which in their original conception only ever existed in real time and were communicated orally. Reembodying her approaches at the piano allows me to add greater nuance to my analytical and interpretative framework. I therefore conceptualize performance

⁴¹ Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line*, 1.

as a listening methodology to better inform how I hear Price's compositional voice and cultural impact.

When we consider performance in the broader sense as a form of entertainment, this definition does little to situate the aesthetic event of the recital or recording in meanings beyond audience satisfaction. Danielle McGeough recognizes that such broad definitions make it difficult to establish a concept around performance that fits its various applications in different contexts. However, in the area of performance studies, McGeough writes, “performances are viewed and analysed for their ability to restore, revive, and re-create relationships, culture, and power.”⁴² As my repertoire has evolved to feature more works by Price and many other composers from marginalized and/or minoritized groups, my definition of performance has come to mean this: the audiovisual advocacy for the stories that need to be told and, therefore, the stories that need to be heard.

My performances enact Black feminist re-framings of the modern-day concert hall in the sense that, to quote Akwugo Emejulu and Francesca Sobande, “Black feminism is always a creative and dynamic production of thinking and living otherwise.”⁴³ My recitals and recordings interrogate aural, visual, and spatial histories that continue to determine who is worthy of a platform and who is not. They generate processes of restoring, reviving, and recreating other culturally significant and aesthetically engaging (though lesser-known) stories. Performance, as a means to historicize, analyse, and interpret, is also a measure of how far we have come today—not only in our willingness to hear black women, but to grant them the stage.

⁴² Danielle McGeough, “Performance Studies,” in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, ed. Mike Allen (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2018), 1217.

⁴³ Akwugo Emejulu and Francesca Sobande, eds. *To Exist is to Resist: Black Feminism in Europe* (London: Pluto Press, 2019), 3.

Price scholarship and Black women's studies

Price scholarship in the academy emerged during historic developments in Black women's studies, around the 1970s, which, in turn, gave rise to a theory and praxis of Black feminism.⁴⁴ Black women's studies were built on the premise that “only a Black *and* feminist analysis can sufficiently comprehend the materials of Black women's studies; and only a creative Black feminist perspective will enable the field to expand.”⁴⁵ The title of the groundbreaking work *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave: Black Women's Studies* emphasized how historical and contemporary discourse, affected by gender and race, possessed an either-or absoluteness. Within this world of absolutes, black women's identities were erased in favor of a predominantly “white and middle-class” narrative of womanhood.⁴⁶ Black womanhood was also subsumed into a historiography that prioritized racial uplift over gendered empowerment. *All the Women are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us are Brave* sought to address the prevalent treatment of race and gender as “mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis” and give academic definition to the double Other-ness of black women's identity.⁴⁷ Co-authors Akasha Hull and Barbara Smith explained, “like any politically disenfranchised groups, Black women could not exist consciously until we began to name ourselves. The growth of Black women's studies is an essential aspect of that process of naming.”⁴⁸ Their

⁴⁴ Akasha (Gloria T.) Hull and Barbara Smith, “Introduction: The Politics of Black Women's Studies,” in *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, 2nd ed., eds. Akasha (Gloria T.) Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith (New York: The Feminist Press, 2015), xxv.

⁴⁵ Hull and Smith, “Introduction: The Politics of Black Women's Studies,” xxi.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, xxvi.

⁴⁷ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1, no. 8 (1989): 139.

⁴⁸ Hull and Smith, xvii

work prefigured Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's introduction of the term "intersectionality" to feminist theory and bolstered the next three decades of Black feminist scholarship.⁴⁹

The nascent field of Black women's studies signaled a departure from studies that centred the black (implicitly male) Other⁵⁰ and the non-European (and, again, implicitly male) Other,⁵¹ and brought further intersectional depth to critical understandings of Otherness. Coinciding with this emerging discipline was Mildred Denby Green's 1975 dissertation, "A Study of the Lives and Works of Five Black Women Composers in America." Green brought together two areas of scholarship that were, at that time, rarely considered side by side: the role of women in twentieth-century composition and the role of black composers in the same period.⁵² Her study of Price, Margaret Bonds (1913–1972), Evelyn Pittman (1910–1992), Julia Perry (1924–1979), and Lena McLin (b. 1929) lay at this crucial intersection holding historiographical significance for the documentation of African-American women in composition.

Green's dissertation lay the groundwork for her 1983 *Black Women Composers: A Genesis*. Joseph Southern favorably reviewed and praised Green's pioneering efforts in *The Black Perspective in Music*:⁵³

⁴⁹ See Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 139–167; bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman?": Black Women and Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 1981); Hazel Carby, "'It Jus Be's Dat Way Sometime': The Sexual Politics of Women's Blues," *Radical America* 20, no. 4 (1986): 9–22; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998); and Eileen M. Hayes and Linda F. Williams, eds., *Black Women and Music: More than the Blues* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

⁵⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

⁵¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

⁵² Mildred Denby Green, "A Study of the Lives and Works of Five Black Women Composers in America," (D.Mus.E. diss., The University of Oklahoma, 1975), 1.

⁵³ Joseph Southern was the husband of Eileen Southern (whose work is frequently referenced, particularly in "Chapter Three: The 'Virtual Agency' of the Vernacular in Price's Sonata in E minor"). The Southern's founded *The Black Perspective in Music* in 1972. From 1973–1990,

Ten years ago, the black woman musician was practically invisible in black music literature unless she moved in the world of jazz or blues. Finally the feminist movement is beginning to have its impact on black music research, and, as a result, an increasing number of doctoral dissertations and publications report on the important contributions black women have made to history as concert artists, conductors, members of symphony orchestras, master teachers, and particularly as composers. Mildred Green's book ... is the first to examine the lives and works of black women composers.⁵⁴

Black Women Composers made Price visible in a history of American music-makers who were women and who were of African descent; it was one of the first scholarly texts to do so. This study into the aesthetics of Price and her navigation of a New World nationalism builds upon Green's foundational work and advances her purview to evidence Price not only as visible but also as actively involved in the crafting of a national music identity and, by extension, in the very shaping of this history.

Two years after Green's dissertation, *The Black Perspective in Music* published Barbara Garvey Jackson's "Florence Price, Composer." Building upon the contents of an academic paper delivered at the American Musicological Society conference in Washington, D.C. in 1976, "Florence Price, Composer" conveyed a detailed biographical portrait. The depth of Jackson's research on an African-American female composer was unprecedented and went against contemporary trends in studies of African American composers. As Ora Williams, Thelma Williams, Dora Wilson, and Ramona Matthewson noted, "recently—during the 60s—Black female composers [were] further obscured as a trend developed to highlight a small group of Black male composers."⁵⁵

the journal offered groundbreaking studies in African continental and diasporic music history. See Laura Jessena Johnson Keith, "Eileen Southern, *The Black Perspective in Music: Documentation of Black Music History*," (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 2008).

⁵⁴ Joseph Southern, "Reviewed Work(s): Black Women Composers: A Genesis by Mildred Denby Green; In One Lifetime by Verna Arvey," *The Black Perspective in Music* 13, no.1 (1985): 122.

⁵⁵ Ora Williams, Thelma Williams, Dora Wilson and Ramona Matthewson, "American Black Women Composers: A Selected Annotated Bibliography," in *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave*, 298.

Jackson delved into wider historical records to shed greater light on Price's family roots and Arkansas upbringing. She grounded Price's biography in southern race relations, the impact of Depression-era Chicago, and the nation's political climate. Her research infused the Price narrative with the type of socio-cultural perspective that heavily informs my investigation into Price's compositional identity. "Florence Price, Composer" was one of Jackson's earliest contributions in her long-lasting dedication to the study of Price.⁵⁶ Another early contribution took place between the years of 1974 and 1975, when Jackson, alongside researcher Mary Dengler Hudgins, began the necessary work of establishing the indispensable Florence Price materials at the Special Collections Department of the University of Arkansas. Price's daughter, Florence Robinson, donated the Florence Price papers to Special Collections a year after William Grant Still bequeathed his papers to the University of Arkansas.

Helen Walker-Hill's contributions emerged in the early 1990s and were multi-disciplinary in scope. A mix of musicological, ethnomusicological, editorial, and performance-based approaches served to further diversify Price scholarship. Walker-Hill, the musicologist, drew inspiration from Green and Jackson, and from Rae Linda Brown's 1987 dissertation on Price.⁵⁷ Her efforts turned to cataloguing piano solo and ensemble works by black women composers, past and present, in and outside of the United States.⁵⁸ Price consistently surfaced in Walker-Hill's articles and publications, but her work broadened to encapsulate the wider activity of black women in classical music and culminated in the

⁵⁶ Barbara Garvey Jackson, "Florence Price, Composer," *The Black Perspective in Music* 5, no. 1 (1977): 42.

⁵⁷ Helen Walker-Hill, "Discovering the Music of Black Women Composers," *American Music Teacher* 40, no.1 (1990): 20.

⁵⁸ Walker-Hill, *Piano Music by Black Women Composers: A Catalog of Solo and Ensemble Works* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992).

comprehensive *From Spirituals to Symphonies: African–American Women Composers and Their Music* (2007).

Walker-Hill, as ethnomusicologist, was particularly drawn to Price’s Chicago milieu, again broadening her purview to accommodate the growing list of Chicago-based black women composers and the socio-cultural conditions at the heart of this phenomenon.⁵⁹ This focus on the interactivity of African-American women composers in Chicago not only highlighted Price as a key figure, it set her achievements against the burgeoning black cultural renaissance that was fostered by numerous black women practitioners of note, including Nora Douglas Holt (c. 1885–1974), Shirley Graham Du Bois (1896–1977), and Estella Conway Bonds (1882–1957), the mother of Margaret Bonds.

Walker-Hill, as editor, brought the unpublished manuscripts of Price and many other female composers of African descent into publication. In an anthology that covered a century of piano works by black women composers, Price’s first *Fantasia Negre* (1929) featured alongside Margaret Bonds’ “Troubled Water” (1967), which is the final work from Bonds’ three-movement *Spiritual Suite*. The anthology opened pointedly:

Why a collection of music exclusively by women composers of African descent? Their music deserves to appear in anthologies alongside music by other composers, white or black, male or female. The reasons for such a collection lie in the present lack of awareness of black women composers on the part of the general public, and the scarcity of readily available music, particularly for solo piano. Very few of the selections in this volume are available elsewhere. There is a great deal more music, and it is hoped that this collection will help lead to its recognition, performance and publication.⁶⁰

Walker-Hill the pianist brought many of the works from the anthology to life through performances and recordings. Her 1995 *Kaleidoscope: Music by African American Women* featured *Fantasia Negre* and “Troubled Water” alongside works by the Chicago-affiliated

⁵⁹ Walker-Hill, “Black Women Composers in Chicago: Then and Now,” *Black Music Research Journal* 12, no. 1 (1992): 1.

⁶⁰ Walker-Hill, ed., *Black Women Composers: A Century of Piano Music (1893–1990)* (Bryn Mawr: Hildegard Publishing Company, 1992), 3.

Nora Holt, Irene Britton Smith (1907–1999), Betty Jackson King (1928–1994), Lena McLin, Dolores White (b. 1932), and Regina Harris Baoicchi (b. 1956). Rae Linda Brown lauded *Kaleidoscope* as “a welcome addition to the relatively small number of recordings of music by African American composers” and for speaking strongly “to the diversity of the African American concert tradition and to the contribution of black women composers throughout the century.”⁶¹

Brown’s contributions to Price scholarship spanned four decades, beginning with her 1987 dissertation on Price’s orchestral music. (Brown credits both Green and Jackson for their support with the study.⁶²) She wrote with two specific purposes: first, “to fill the lacunae of biographical monographs of those pioneering Afro-American composers who have contributed significantly to the rich and diversified musical heritage of black Americans, using archival sources, oral histories, and private collections of manuscripts and memorabilia”; and, second, “to introduce the reader to Price’s symphonic music [via] her most significant compositions, the Symphony in E minor (1933 [*sic*]), the Piano Concerto in One Movement (1934), and the Symphony in C minor (1940).”⁶³ Brown brought the aforementioned symphonies into mainstream accessibility with their co-edited publication in 2008.⁶⁴

Brown’s research explicitly connected Price to the black cultural renaissance that spanned the first half of the twentieth century. Her writings tied Price’s activity to Harlem Renaissance composers William Grant Still and William Levi Dawson. Though Price, herself, was not specifically of the Harlem Renaissance, the construction of a narrative that

⁶¹ Rae Linda Brown, “Review of *Kaleidoscope: Music by African American Women* by Helen Walker–Hill,” *American Music* 16, no. 1 (1998): 118.

⁶² Brown, “Selected Orchestral Music of Florence B. Price (1888–1953) in the Context of Her Life and Work,” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1987), iii.

⁶³ Brown, “Selected Orchestral Music of Florence B. Price,” 1–2.

⁶⁴ Florence Price, *Symphony Nos. 1 and 3*, eds. Rae Linda Brown and Wayne Shirley (Middleton: A-R Editions, Inc., 2008).

drew these three names together had solid historical grounding. In a 1936 article entitled “Spirituals to Symphonies” (that evidently inspired the title of Walker-Hill’s 2007 monograph), Graham Du Bois wrote, “Dawson’s [*Negro Folk Symphony*] was the third symphony by a Negro which in the last four years has been played by a reputable orchestra in this country. And one of these symphonists is a woman! Florence B. Price.”⁶⁵ The other African-American symphonist to whom Graham Du Bois referred was Still, whose *Afro-American Symphony* was performed in 1931 by the Rochester Symphony Orchestra.⁶⁶ Graham Du Bois’ essay was published while the Harlem Renaissance was at its peak. Thus, Brown’s further study of Price’s musical activity against this backdrop served to reject the 1960s trend of presenting an all-male narrative of African-American composers. Brown affirmed Price’s position in a triumvirate of African-American symphonists whose orchestral masterpieces were the product of a new and exciting era of black cultural production in the urban north and west.⁶⁷ In re-situating Price in the Black Chicago Renaissance and the activities of a black female intelligentsia, this study bridges Brown’s studies with research that unearths the inner workings of Chicago’s own cultural revolution and role of African-American women therein.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Shirley Graham, “Spirituals to Symphonies,” *Etude*, (1936): 691.

⁶⁶ Graham, “Spirituals to Symphonies,” 691.

⁶⁷ Rae Linda Brown, “William Grant Still, Florence Price, and William Dawson: Echoes of the Harlem Renaissance,” in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd Jr. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 71–86 and Brown, “Florence B. Price’s ‘Negro Symphony,’” in *Temples for Tomorrow: Looking Back at the Harlem Renaissance*, eds. Geneviève Fabre and Michel Feith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) 84–98.

⁶⁸ See Anne Meis Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Mary Hricko, *The Genesis of the Chicago Renaissance: Theodore Dreiser, Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and James T. Farrell* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Robert W. Bone and Richard A. Courage, *The Muse in Bronzeville: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1932–1950* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011) and Darlene Clark Hine and John McCluskey Jr., eds., *The Black Chicago Renaissance* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

Brown's influence, in particular, continues to be felt as we celebrate the posthumous publication of *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price*, which is the definitive and most comprehensive text solely dedicated to Price's life and works to date.⁶⁹ My research additionally unfolds in conversation with Douglas Shadle's writings on the cultivation of an American musical identity,⁷⁰ Marquese Carter's explorations into Price's art songs,⁷¹ A. Kori Hill's investigations into modernist techniques in Price's Piano Concerto in One Movement and Violin Concertos Nos. 1 and 2,⁷² Er-Gene Kahng's recordings of Price's Violin Concertos Nos. 1 and 2, and Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4,⁷³ and John Michael Cooper and Lara Downes' collaborative efforts to bring Price's piano music into publication and new recordings.⁷⁴ Its Black feminist purview further aligns with *Black Women and Music: More than the Blues*, which is the first interdisciplinary anthology to explore black women's negotiation of race and gender in multiple forms of African-American cultural production, including rap/hip-hop, art music, jazz, musical theater, electric blues, and gospel.⁷⁵ My study shares the same assertion upon which the volume is predicated: "black women's negotiation of race and gender in music is as significant as their achievements as performers, creators,

⁶⁹ Rae Linda Brown, *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020).

⁷⁰ Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation*.

⁷¹ Marquese Carter, "The Poet and Her Song: Analyzing the Art Songs of Florence B. Price," (D.Mus. diss., Indiana University, 2018).

⁷² A. Kori Hill, "Satisfaction—No ... I am Never Quite Satisfied with What I Write:" Afro-Modernist Technique and Experimentation in the Concertos of Florence B. Price," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, forthcoming).

⁷³ Er-Gene Kahng, *Florence Price: Violin Concertos*, Albany, TROY1706, 2018, compact disc, and Fort Smith Symphony, *Price: Symphonies Nos. 1 & 4*, Naxos American Classics, 8559827, 2019, compact disc.

⁷⁴ Lara Downes, "Florence Price Piano Discoveries," *Lara Downes*, February 2020, <http://www.laradownes.com/florence-price-piano-discoveries>.

⁷⁵ Eileen M. Hayes, "New Perspectives in Studies of Black Women and Music," in *Black Women and Music: More than the Blues*, Eileen M. Hayes and Linda F. Williams, eds., (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 1.

listeners, and educators.”⁷⁶ It is thus my goal to theorize how Price’s negotiations were staged and enacted in the classical realm.

Chapter overview

I introduce Price via a detailed biographical portrait in “Chapter Two: The Life and Times of Florence Price: From Family Origins to the Wanamaker Era.” Price’s biography unfolds across five key periods; her location, activity, and community define each one. The first reaches back to her family origins. It focuses on the movement and prolific career of her father Dr. James H. Smith, touches upon what is known of her mother, Florence Irene Smith (née Gulliver), and draws attention to the mix of racial and ethnic categories that comprised Price’s identity. The second concerns Price’s early years in Arkansas (1887–1903). With education as the theme, this section looks at the musical, academic, religious, and societal factors in her upbringing and the key figures that belonged to, or in some cases, passed through her community. The third is marked by her studies at the New England Conservatory of Music (1903–1906). This three-year period is contextualized in the founding of the conservatory, the rise in women studying music, and notable shifts in the American musical landscape. The fourth follows Price’s return to the South (1907–1927). Her career as an educator and composer is cast against the backdrop of Jim Crow and the forms of discrimination and danger that began to enter her life as a result of increasing anti-black sentiment and violence. This section details the catalysts for her eventual move to Chicago at the end of this period. The fifth introduces the Wanamaker era (1927–1932) and draws the contexts of the Great Migration and the Great Depression into Price’s biography; it provides an overview of Price’s activity within the first five years of her move and leads to the pivotal moment of the 1932 Rodman Wanamaker Music Contest.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

I employ Robert S. Hatten's "Theory of Virtual Agency" in "Chapter Three: The 'Virtual Agency' of the Vernacular in the Sonata in E minor." There, I delve into Price's employment of the black musical idiom and embed performance as a listening methodology to inform my analysis and interpretation. My focus on the vernacular specifically pertains to the African-American folkloric influences that surface in the sonata, as opposed to contemporary African-American influences such as blues, jazz, gospel, or Broadway. The focus is determined by Price's own language around the significance of the Negro Spirituals and antebellum dance influences in the establishment of what she termed a "national musical idiom."⁷⁷ The analysis proceeds in four parts, beginning with the significance of the key signature and moving on to the three movements: "Andante-Allegro," "Andante" and "Scherzo." The "Andante-Allegro" section primarily illuminates Price's integration of spiritual themes within the sonata form; the "Andante" section grounds Price's aesthetic in the Negro Spiritual tradition and its younger relation, the art-song spiritual, while contextualizing aspects of her compositional writing in their Romantic influences; and the "Scherzo" section draws upon all of the above in conjunction with the influence of African-American antebellum dance culture and the black vernacular trope of "signifyin(g)" as defined by Henry Louis Gates Jr.⁷⁸

In "Chapter Four: Composing the Black Chicago Renaissance," I situate Price in a dynamic cultural movement and recognize the many crucial roles played by numerous women therein. Before exploring their musical journeys, however, I first examine the ideological and intellectual paradigms that influenced where they were coming from. I then provide an overview of the Black Chicago Renaissance and distinguish it from its better-

⁷⁷ Class Essays, 1938, n.d., Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a Series I, Box 1, Folder 3), Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

⁷⁸ See Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*, Twenty-Fifth-Anniversary Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

known Harlem counterpart so as to reinforce the importance of Price's Chicago to both her craft and community. This leads to the theorization of a Black Chicago Renaissance school that, I posit, was built upon the aforementioned paradigms, but spoke to the needs and wants of the present day and transpired in Price's music-making. Citizenship and identity emerge as key themes; I historicize their evolution in contemporary discourse, from Price's formative years at the New England Conservatory to her symphonic debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. From there, I pivot to the interactions between Price's music and city, wherein performance functioned along definitions of audiovisual self and collective advocacy. My reflections on Price's legacy in the epilogue draw the dissertation to a close. Therein I consider how her aesthetics—an amalgamation of histories within histories—may (re)sound in the twenty-first century.

Chapter Two

From Family Origins to the Wanamaker Era

Family origins

Florence Beatrice Price (née Smith) was born in Little Rock (Pulaski County), Arkansas on April 9, 1887.⁷⁹ Price's father, Dr. James H. Smith, was a dentist. Her mother, Florence Irene Smith (née Gulliver) was an elementary school teacher. They married in 1876 and had three children: Charles, Gertrude, and Florence (the youngest).

Smith was born in 1843 to free parents in Camden, Delaware.⁸⁰ At the age of around four or five, he relocated to New Jersey with his parents. Soon after the death of his father in 1858, Smith left New Jersey for New York City, where he worked as a private secretary to a sympathetic white woman called Mrs. J. Bastrop. The fifteen-year-old Smith continued his schooling alongside employment under Mrs. Bastrop. After a short period in New York, Smith then studied dentistry in Philadelphia. First, he worked under the guidance of renowned dentist Dr. Clark, who was also a friend of Mrs. Bastrop. Then, he took on apprenticeship in the office of Drs. Kennard, Longfellow, and Flagg. Smith worked with the anticipation of eventually enrolling into dental college. But with the American Civil War looming, it was not long before he was drafted into the army. However, without Smith's knowledge, Mrs. Bastrop hired a substitute for \$1100 so that Smith could continue his apprenticeship uninterrupted. Smith remained in Philadelphia for the next three years and, in 1863, applied to dental college. His application was dismissed on the grounds of his race.

⁷⁹ Portions of this chapter duplicate an article that was written by this author and published by the *Kapralova Society Journal: A Journal of Women in Music*. Samantha Ege, "Florence Price and the Politics of her Existence," *Kapralova Society Journal: A Journal of Women in Music* 16 (2018): 1–10.

⁸⁰ The biography of Dr. James H. Smith is derived from *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Jefferson, Lonoke, Faulkner, Grant, Saline, Perry, Garland and Hot Springs Counties, Arkansas* (Chicago and Nashville: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1889), 807–808.

Smith therefore entered the profession through the office of Kennard, Longfellow, and Flagg. Following one year of further study after the rejection of his college application, the office of Kennard, Longfellow, and Flagg conducted Smith's examination and granted him his dental certification.

Smith left Philadelphia for Pittsburgh, which became the home of his first practice. He experienced modest success but soon decided to establish his practice in Chicago. While in Chicago, Smith also received a scholarship to study business; he attended courses at night. Smith's move to Chicago coincided with the city's growing African-American population and the rise of the black professional. Smith's practice, unfortunately, did not survive the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. This prompted him to move to Arkansas, where he taught in order to earn the funds for his much-needed dental instruments and equipment.⁸¹ It was not until 1876 that he resumed his career in dentistry.

Census records showed that between the American Civil War and World War I, more than 200,000 African Americans settled in Arkansas—the highest migration numbers of any state.⁸² This exodus had a significant impact on Arkansas' economic growth, political climate, post-Reconstruction development, and pro-Jim Crow directions.⁸³ Arkansas was, at this time, “the Great Negro State of the country.”⁸⁴ Smith established his own dental practice in Little Rock in 1886 and catered to an affluent and interracial clientele that included the Governor of Arkansas. He was “one of the leading practicing dentists of Little Rock, and well known throughout the State and Pulaski County as a prominent colored citizen.”⁸⁵ Smith was

⁸¹ Mary Dengler Hudgins research on Florence Price, Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers (MC 988 Series I, Box 1, Folder 6), Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

⁸² Story Matkin-Rawn, “The Great Negro State of the Country”: Arkansas's Reconstruction and the Other Great Migration,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 72, no.1 (2013): 3.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Matkin-Rawn, 26.

⁸⁵ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs*, 807.

also a painter and inventor, as well as an active figure in Arkansas' political scene, serving as one of the Garfield electors of the State. He founded several institutions with the goal of racial uplift, one of which included the Colored State Fair in the Arkansan city of Pine Bluff.

While Smith's movement across the United States reflected common migration patterns in the late nineteenth century, Smith's biography and social circumstances were atypical of most African-American lives during this time. In an era that was largely defined by the polarity of black and white, Smith's position within the black elite of a cultured professional class enabled his family privileges and prospects that remained out of reach for much of the black population. He epitomized what it was to be of the Talented Tenth, that is, the top ten percent of the African-American population set apart by their education and wealth.⁸⁶ In addition to this, Smith's marriage to Florence Irene Gulliver allowed for further financial stability. As contemporary records note, "Mrs. Smith's mother [Mary Gulliver, née McCoy] having died a few months ago, in Indianapolis, has left a considerable property to be divided between Mrs. Smith and her sister. This added to what the Doctor and his wife already have, will place them in easy circumstances for life."⁸⁷

Mrs. Smith hailed from Indianapolis and came from a family of successful businessmen. Her father, William Gulliver, had owned a chain of barbershops, as had her maternal grandfather, William McCoy.⁸⁸ Mrs. Smith's education included music, and music was one of the subjects she taught in her career as an educator. According to her

⁸⁶ Talented Tenth ideology gained traction at the turn of the century. The key tenet was that social change could be instigated under the leadership of this elite group and that the application of their privilege would uplift the race. W. E. B. Du Bois wrote to this effect in his eponymously titled "Talented Tenth" essay. He pinpointed "education" and "work" as "the levers to uplift a people" and deduced that "the Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought among their people." W. E. B. DuBois, "The Talented Tenth" in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today*, Booker T. Washington (New York: J. Pott & Company, 1903), 75.

⁸⁷ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs*, 808.

⁸⁸ Brown, "Selected Orchestral Music of Florence B. Price (1888–1953)," 14 and 18.

granddaughter, Florence Louise Price Robinson, Mrs. Smith had also been a “talented soprano and concert pianist.”⁸⁹ Much like Dr. Smith, Mrs. Smith had grown up in similar circumstances of relative privilege. It may be assumed that prior to 1876, Mrs. Smith, then Miss Gulliver, made her way to Arkansas and continued to teach, but the dates and exact pattern of her movements are currently unknown. Nevertheless, once in Little Rock, both Dr. and Mrs. Smith were highly active within their community, as well as dedicated members of the racially integrated Allison Presbyterian Church.

Price’s family history was susceptible to the politics of the one-drop rule. The one-drop rule defined blackness by the presence of a single drop of “black blood”—or “Negro blood” as it would have been termed at the time.⁹⁰ While rules against miscegenation reached as far back as the country’s colonial age, the particular notion of the one-drop rule gained traction in the nineteenth century. It emerged from the fear of invisible blackness infiltrating white society and enabling the integration of white-passing African Americans.

The one-drop rule made Price a black woman. Price embraced this aspect of her identity, but factors of colorism along the color line rendered her lighter shade of visible blackness more culturally acceptable. The racial ambiguity that arose from her mixed ancestry aided her social mobility. Price cited her maternal racial background as “French, Indian [i.e., Native American], Spanish” and her paternal racial background as “Negro, Indian [Native American] and English.”⁹¹ Mrs. Smith’s racial identity is not associated with

⁸⁹ Green, *Black Women Composers*, 31.

⁹⁰ Price alluded to the rule when describing herself as a woman with Negro blood in her veins in a letter to Boston Symphony Orchestra conductor Serge Koussevitzky. See Florence Beatrice Price to Serge Koussevitzky, July 5, 1943. Koussevitzky Collection, Library of Congress, Music Division, quoted in *Florence Price: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3*, eds. Rae Linda Brown and Wayne Shirley (Middleton, Wisconsin: A-R Editions, Inc., 2008), xxxv.

⁹¹ Correspondence, 1929–1953, Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a, Series I, Box 1, Folder 1) Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

any African ancestry even though she was recognized as a “colored” woman in Little Rock.⁹² Mrs. Smith bore a fair complexion but she could also be described as white-passing. And in the aftermath of her eventual separation from Smith (around 1906), Mrs. Smith relocated to Indianapolis where she was accepted as a white woman.⁹³

Early years in Arkansas (1887–1903)

Price, nicknamed “Bea” to avoid confusion with her mother Florence Irene, began her musical education at the age of three. She learnt the piano from her mother and later studied violin and organ. Price wrote about the events surrounding her early study of music and credited the positive influence of her parents on her musical path:

My father, though a dentist by vocation was by avocation a painter of landscapes, an inventor and a writer. Perhaps his love of originality was passed on to me and given expression through that medium with which my mother was gifted. I am in possession of a large oil painting of his which was adjudged as a winner during the Field Columbian World Exposition of 1893, Chicago. Both parents favored my choice of music.⁹⁴

Price’s regular attendance at the Allison Presbyterian Church served to further her musical development. There, she regularly heard the sacred works of J. S. Bach, Mendelssohn, and Vaughan Williams.⁹⁵ She was also exposed to the chorales of Mozart, Palestrina, Haydn, Hummel, and Telemann.⁹⁶

Price began to compose around the same time that she took piano lessons with her mother. Price recalled “compos[ing] little tunes at that age for Blind Boone, who with his [manager] Mr. [John] Lange and Mrs. Lange always stopped with us when giving a concert

⁹² Brown, “Selected Orchestral Music of Florence B. Price (1888–1953),” 18.

⁹³ Terrance McKnight, “The Price of Admission: A Musical Biography of Florence Price,” *WQXR*, last modified February 6, 2013, <http://www.wqxr.org/#!/story/271521-musical-biography-florence-beatrice-price/>.

⁹⁴ Correspondence, 1929–1953.

⁹⁵ McKnight, “The Price of Admission.”

⁹⁶ Reverend Joseph T. Duryea, D.D., *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1874).

in [Little Rock].”⁹⁷ Price was referring to the visits of virtuosic pianist and composer John William “Blind” Boone (1864–1927).

Boone’s identity as a performer and composer was shaped by three key aspects: first, he connected with both the black folk idiom and the European classical tradition—both popular and classical music shared the same stage in his performances; second, Boone was described as a “mulatto,” a racial designation that brought him relative mobility around black and white socio-cultural spheres and the ability to perform African-American repertoire in white spaces and European repertoire in black spaces; and third, Boone moved with the musical trends of his time over the course of a career that lasted almost half a century, progressing his style from plantation melodies, to “coon songs,” to ragtime.⁹⁸ Boone toured the country with his Blind Boone Concert Company.⁹⁹

Boone and his manager, African-American impresario John Lange Jr., were some of the many figures of note that the Smiths hosted. The Smith home welcomed Frederick Douglass through its doors. The Sheppersons were also a part of the Smith’s intimate circle. In 1895, a woman then known as Carrie Fambro Still was widowed only a few months after the birth of her son, William Grant Still. As a result, Mrs. Still moved to Little Rock with her son, and soon after, she met and eventually married a clerk called Charles B. Shepperson.¹⁰⁰ William Grant Still went on to be known as the Dean of African-American composers and a key actor in the Harlem Renaissance. But while in Little Rock, the Smiths and the

⁹⁷ Correspondence, 1929–1953, Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a).

⁹⁸ Jack A. Batterson, *Blind Boone: Missouri’s Ragtime Pioneer* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998) 1–2.

⁹⁹ A young African-American woman and personal friend of Boone called Melissa Fuell-Cuther wrote his first biography in 1915, during his lifetime. Her now out-of-print biography can be found in *Merit, Not Sympathy, Wins: The Life and Times of Blind Boone*, eds. Mary Collins Barile and Christine Montgomery (Kirksville: University of Missouri Press, 2012), 27–208.

¹⁰⁰ Catherine Parsons Smith, *William Grant Still: A Study in Contradictions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 24.

Sheppersons mixed in the same social circles and took a keen interest in similar intellectual pursuits.

Still's 1967 reflections on his Little Rock upbringing shed light on what life might have been like for the Smiths, and in particular, the young Price.¹⁰¹ He remarked:

... it may be hard for many people to believe that my boyhood was as it was—a typically American one, far removed from the ordinary concept of a little colored boy growing up in the South. I knew neither wealth nor poverty, for I lived in a comfortable middle-class home, with luxuries such as books, musical instruments and phonograph records in quantities found in few other homes of this sort.

All of this was the result of my having had the good fortune to have been born to intelligent, forward-looking parents, as well as to the fact that Little Rock, where I grew up was considered by many of us to be an enlightened community in the South.

It is true that there was segregation in Little Rock during my boyhood, but my family lived in a mixed neighborhood and our friends were both white and colored.¹⁰²

While the Smiths and Sheppersons encountered greater racial integration in their social and religious communities, segregation was still par for the course in education. Price's academic studies commenced at a Catholic convent in Little Rock.¹⁰³ When she reached fifth grade, she entered a local segregated public school called Union School. There, Charlotte Andrews Stephens oversaw her academic development. Stephens was the first African-American teacher in Little Rock. Though born into slavery, Stephens recognized that her trajectory had been heavily influenced by what she called the "peculiar privileges" of her upbringing.¹⁰⁴ Stephens' father, though enslaved, was committed to the task of educating fellow slaves as well as freemen and women. He had to conduct his teaching activities in secret, as slaves were prohibited from learning to read and write. Stephens' mother provided for the family through her laundry business, even during her enslavement. Education and enterprise were

¹⁰¹ Brown, "Selected Orchestral Music of Florence B. Price (1888–1953)," 21.

¹⁰² William Grant Still, "My Arkansas Boyhood," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1967): 285.

¹⁰³ Correspondence, 1929–1953.

¹⁰⁴ Jeannie M. Wayne and Nancy A. Williams, eds., *Arkansas Biography: A Collection of Notable Lives* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 271.

characteristic of Stephens' upbringing and the path that followed. Her teaching career spanned seventy years. It began in 1869 when, as a fifteen-year-old, she stepped in to cover the class of her white teacher who was away with sickness. She retired in 1939, by which time she had pursued higher education at Oberlin College, Ohio, taught from elementary to high school level, served as a principal twice, and had a school named in her honor. Reflecting on the breadth of her career, Stephens said, "I am thankful to the Heavenly Father for permitting me to work for years in the field of public education for a race so needy and so hungry for knowledge."¹⁰⁵

Price was one of the many students to benefit from Stephens' dedication to uplifting the race via education. Still was another student of Stephens. Records do not confirm Stephens' specific role in the musical education of Price or Still, but it is likely that Stephens would have encouraged their musical inclinations and gifts.¹⁰⁶ Stephens organized communal entertainment in the form of skits, concerts and games to accommodate the need for recreational outlets in Little Rock.¹⁰⁷ Whether or not Price and Still participated in these events is, again, unconfirmed, but this detail certainly lends support to the theory that Stephens may have accommodated Price's and Still's musical interests.

Like Stephens, Price's circumstances were advantaged by her own set of peculiar privileges; and, like Stephens, Price set about devoting her time, energy, and resources to pursuing the path for which she seemed so destined. Stephens and Price were both sixteen years of age when they entered the academic worlds of Oberlin College and the New England Conservatory of Music, respectively. However, Stephens was raised in the era of slavery and committed to the uplift her race as a direct result of her experiences. In contrast, Price was

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 272.

¹⁰⁶ Jackson, 33.

¹⁰⁷ Jessie Carney Smith, ed., *Notable Black American Women: Book II* (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1996), 617.

raised in a generation that had moved somewhat beyond her predecessor's experiences. Price's relative privilege meant that there was a degree of freedom in her decision to immerse herself in African-American culture. Price's trajectory was a variation on the themes of education and enterprise that were so prevalent in Stephens' life and so redolent of Talented Tenth ideology, long before the term even came into existence. Yet, despite the parallels, there was a great disparity in the circumstances that encased their experiences of African-American life.

In 1903, Price graduated from Capitol Hill High School. (Stephens had served as its principal twenty-six years earlier.) Price was the valedictorian of her class. Following her graduation, she prepared to embark upon higher musical study in Boston at the New England Conservatory of Music. However, the Little Rock that she was about to leave had transformed significantly from the Little Rock that she had known in her early years. Race relations deteriorated as Jim Crow laws, enacted after the collapse of Reconstruction, grew to dominate and dictate the conditions of African-American existence.

In Arkansas, racial tensions erupted into race riots. White mobs carried out routine lynchings and other forms of violence upon African Americans under the justification of Jim Crow. Price and Still's Arkansas changed beyond recognition to the extent that Still lamented of Little Rock, "when the city's name was splashed all over the headlines the length and breadth of the world, those of us who had lived there were amazed and incredulous. We could not believe that of Little Rock, because it was contrary to so much we had known and experienced."¹⁰⁸ But to the older generations of black Arkansans, it was evident that the once "Great Negro state of the country" had already begun to move with the Jim Crow current as early as the 1880s and 1890s.

¹⁰⁸ Still, 285.

Jackson reveals that “black office holders began to disappear as early as 1888 ... and by 1894 there were no longer any blacks in either house of the legislature. By 1892 ... the process of disenfranchisement for blacks was well underway.”¹⁰⁹ Childhood had shielded Price and Still from the seismic shifts that had been occurring beneath the surface of their everyday. As an adult, however, Price encountered the racist underbelly of the South in a way that she previously had not. In the year of her return to the South, Arkansas enacted the 1906 “white primary” rule that, as defined by *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture*, “barred black votes from participating in the state’s Democratic primaries, which had become the state’s only meaningful elections.”¹¹⁰ But before Price could witness the harsh realities of the South, Boston awaited.

The New England Conservatory of Music (1903–1906)

Eben Tourjée, born in 1834, founded the New England Conservatory of Music in 1867.¹¹¹ Tourjée aimed to establish his new Boston-based institution in the image of the European conservatoire but also, rather importantly, aimed to provide U.S. citizens with the opportunity to pursue quality musical study at home rather than abroad. His vision for such an institution was first explored in 1853, when a nineteen-year-old Tourjée attempted to bring his plans to fruition with the support of his Boston peers. His second attempt fourteen years later saw greater success. The conservatory was initially housed in a few rented rooms at the Boston Music Hall. From there, the inaugural cohort of the New England Conservatory received their education. The ensuing growth of the conservatory necessitated a change of location and in

¹⁰⁹ Jackson, 32.

¹¹⁰ John William Graces, “African Americans,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, last modified May 9, 2018, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=407>.

¹¹¹ For a detailed history, see Bruce McPherson and James Klein, *Measure by Measure: A History of New England Conservatory from 1867* (Boston: Trustees of New England Conservatory of Music, 1995).

1882 the New England Conservatory moved to the St. James Hotel at Franklin Square. The fruit of Tourjée’s vision was described in its early history as “one great literary musical institution in which one can secure absolutely first-class training under the best of social, professional, and literary inspiration.”¹¹² The prestige of the New England Conservatory continued to grow long after Tourjée’s passing in 1891. Carl Faelton was his successor, presiding over the conservatory from 1890 to 1897. George W. Chadwick followed, assuming the role of president from 1897 to 1930.

In a 1911 article on the New England Conservatory, it was noted that the student demographic had included a substantial number of women in the previous year. Out of the 2666 students that enrolled in 1910, 2044 were women and 622 were men.¹¹³ The article detailed that the number of women pursuing music careers across the United States had increased from 13,103 in the year 1880 to 34,519 in the following decade to 52,359 in 1900; the author predicted that from the ratio of increase, numbers would rise to 100,000 in the current decade.¹¹⁴ Though the article did not delve into the intersectional details of race or ethnicity, the author was nonetheless convinced that the New England Conservatory was a driving factor in these statistics.¹¹⁵ Price was a part of this rising female demographic. Additionally, alongside Oberlin Conservatory (founded in 1865), the Boston Conservatory (founded in 1867), and New York’s no-longer-extant National Conservatory of Music in America (founded in 1885), the New England Conservatory was one of the few “Anglo-American” institutions to open opportunities of first-rate conservatory training to men and women of African descent.¹¹⁶

¹¹² “Conservatory of Music,” *The Journal of Education* 36, no. 11 (1892): 194.

¹¹³ “New Conservatory of Music,” *The Journal of Education* 74, no. 6 (1911): 149.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Josephine Wright, “Black Women and Classical Music,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (1984): 19.

Price's pursuit of musical study at the New England Conservatory was by and large determined by which institutions would accept ethnic minority candidates. But even with the conservatory including African-American students in its admissions policy, Price was still directed to distance herself from her African-American identity. Mrs. Smith presented Puebla, Mexico, as Price's hometown.¹¹⁷ She rented an expensive apartment for her daughter, with a maid—the optics of which would have further distanced Price from her black racial identity.¹¹⁸

The breadth of Price's academic studies reflected growing possibilities for women in music at this time. The New Woman of the Progressive Era was, in the musical realm, unlike the dilettante stereotype that pervaded the Victorian era and encased female respectability in the passive “piano girl” archetype.¹¹⁹ The New Woman's musical identities included more than gender-prescribed instruments; they flourished beyond the binary that held, to quote Rae Linda Brown, that “[f]emininity in music was ... delicate, sensitive, graceful, refined, and more lyrical, while masculinity in music was defined as powerful, noble, and more intellectual.”¹²⁰ This binary sought to uphold negative thought toward women's intellectual stamina and creative capacities. As a result, female practitioners—especially those of African descent—were, historically, restricted in their musical training. Price, in line with women's

¹¹⁷ Programs: June 14, 1906. Concert, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, Mass., Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers (MC 988 Series I, Box 1, Folder 5), Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

¹¹⁸ Mary Dengler Hudgins research on Florence Price, Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers (MC 988 Series I, Box 1, Folder 6), Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

¹¹⁹ Judith Tick elaborates on this archetype's outdatedness in the face of an emerging infrastructure that accommodated women's progress. See Judith Tick, “Passed Away Is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Musical Life, 1870–1900,” in Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, eds., *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 325–348.

¹²⁰ Brown and Shirley, eds., *Florence Price: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3*, xxxv.

expanding roles, negotiated a broad and demanding curriculum. Furthermore, her outstanding abilities were noticed, praised, and encouraged.

Table 2.1: History of Price’s training at the New England Conservatory.¹²¹

Harmony	Benjamin Cutter
Pianoforte and sight-playing	Charles F. Denée
Normal Department	F. Addison Porter
Organ	Henry M. Dunham
Ensemble Playing	Joseph Adamowski
Chorus	Wallace Goodrich
Pianoforte	Dr. J Albert Jeffrey, Edwin Klahre
Theory	Louis C. Elson
Solfeggio, Music History and Musical Instruments	“exempted” through exam by Samuel W. Cole
Literature	Ebenezer Charlton Black
Organ Tuning and Repairing	Oliver C. Faust
Concert Department	Clayton D. Gilbert
Hand Culture	Francis Henay
Counterpoint	Frederick Converse

Price had two piano instructors and, in later years, remarked upon the lasting and rather contradictory impressions that they had left upon her. She also remembered Cutter’s encouragement toward her as a composer:

Edwin Klahre, first piano teacher at NEC[,] insisted upon mechanical perfection in technical practise and performance laying less stress upon expression. One day he told me his parents had forced upon him the study of music in spite of his opposition. That

¹²¹ Correspondence, 1929–1953.

was the explanation for his lack of “soulful” expression. Next I studied with Dr. J Albert Jeffrey the exact counterfact of Klahre. He lay the greatest emphasis upon expression. The two opposites gave me the inestimable advantage of strict discipline in both expression and technic—a happy combination. My harmony teacher Cutter was the first teacher to insist that I had talent for composition and should cultivate it.¹²²

Price was an active performer at the New England Conservatory. She gave recitals as both a pianist and organist. She documented her performances at Jordan Hall, the conservatory’s most prestigious venue, as some of her earliest achievements. She wrote:

[I was] selected to play many times in Jordan Hall during [my] school career at NEC. Upon one occasion, I played [Alexandre] Guilmant’s D-minor Sonata for organ. The composer, in America on a concert tour[,] was in the audience. He came forward to shake hands and congratulate me before the audience.¹²³

Table 2.2: History of Price’s performances at the New England Conservatory.¹²⁴

November 26, 1904	<i>Impromptus on a Theme by Clara Wieck, Op. 5</i> (piano)
Pupil’s recital	Robert Schumann
June 9, 1905	<i>Fiat Lux</i> (organ)
Pupil’s recital	Francis Theodore Dubois
January 5, 1906	Sonata in G minor excerpt (organ)
Recital by advanced students	First movement: Maestoso-Più moto Gustav Merkel
March 23, 1906	Sonate Pontificale excerpts (organ)
Recital by advanced students	Second movement: “Adagio” Third movement: “March Pontificale” Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens
June 1, 1906	Allegro in E minor (piano)
Pupil’s recital	Carl Reinecke
June 14, 1906	Sonata in G minor excerpt (organ)
Commencement concert by members of the graduating class	First movement: “Allegro moderato” Henry M. Dunham

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Brown, “Selected Orchestral Music of Florence B. Price (1888–1953),” 24.

Price had proven herself an accomplished organist because not only was she selected to perform the first movement of her organ professor's Sonata in G minor, she was programmed to close the entire concert.¹²⁵ The final recital was held at Jordan Hall. Named after its benefactor Eben D. Jordan, the hall opened in the year of Price's arrival and was built to hold a capacity of more than 1000.¹²⁶ Jordan also gifted the eponymous hall with an organ that possessed an elaborately decorated exterior, bore the influence of Italian Renaissance architecture, and had a dull gold finish.¹²⁷ The organ was built by the Boston-based Hutchings-Votey Organ company and was described as "one of the finest and costliest pipe organs in the world ... probably [surpassing] any other as a distinct concert organ."¹²⁸ This was the instrument that Price played as she brought Guilmant the pleasure of hearing his music and closed her final concert at the conservatory.

Return to the South (1906–1927)

Price returned to Arkansas in 1906 and, in the wake of her parents' separation, lived with her father. Her compositional pursuits came to a standstill upon her return. The reasons for this derived from two fundamental aspects of Price's upbringing: the first was her sense of commitment to the racial uplift of her community, which was instilled in her by the examples she witnessed through her father; and second was the expectation that her priorities would turn to marriage and family, as per social norms.¹²⁹ Teaching grounded Price in her community; she commenced her career as an educator immediately after her return to the South and, as dictated by segregation, all of the institutions in which she worked catered to a

¹²⁵ Programs: June 14, 1906. Concert, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, Mass., Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers (MC 988).

¹²⁶ "Jordan Hall," *New England Conservatory*, accessed June 18, 2018, <https://necmusic.edu/jordan-hall>.

¹²⁷ "Jordan Hall and its Organ," *The Journal of Education* 58, no. 20 (1903): 345.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Brown and Shirley, eds., *Florence Price: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3*, xix.

black demographic. Price's move into education during this period reflected her awareness of the maximum opportunities available to a well-educated, middle-class, African-American woman in the era of Jim Crow.

Price first taught at Cotton Plant–Arkadelphia Academy in Cotton Plant (Woodruff County), Arkansas. The school was a co-education facility run by the white philanthropists of the Presbyterian Board of Missions for Freedmen, which had been responsible for founding schools for African Americans across the South during the 1880s.¹³⁰ While teaching at Cotton Plant, Price met Neumon Leighton, a white musician who resided in the area and had a keen interest in the music of black practitioners. He frequently lectured on the subject of black musicians and composers; it was at one such lecture that they met. As their friendship developed, Leighton became increasingly interested in Price, the composer, and championed her works, particularly the art songs.¹³¹

After less than a year in Cotton Plant, Price joined the music faculty at Shorter College, in North Little Rock (Pulaski County). Shorter College still exists today as a two-year historically black liberal arts institution. The African Methodist Episcopal Church founded the college in 1886 with the goal of educating former slaves and training teachers.¹³² During Price's time, Shorter College (as well as Cotton Plant) offered a learning program that covered elementary through to university-level education.¹³³ Price's employment at Shorter College came to an end soon after the passing of her father in 1910.

After the death of Dr. Smith, Mrs. Smith relocated to Indianapolis, employing the services of the young lawyer (and future son-in-law) Thomas Jewell Price (1884–1943) to

¹³⁰ Nancy Snell Griffith, "Cotton Plant Academy," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, last modified May 18, 2018, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=6548>.

¹³¹ Green, 32.

¹³² Cary Bradburn, "Shorter College," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, last modified May 8, 2016, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2166>.

¹³³ Brown and Shirley, xx.

help her settle the estate of her estranged husband. At this juncture, the Price narrative moves forward in such a way that Mrs. Smith is no longer present. The implications of Mrs. Smith's decision to return to Indianapolis as a self-identified white woman explain her notable absence from Price's life henceforth.¹³⁴ Mrs. Smith sold every item that had belonged to her and her recently deceased husband and, in doing so, erased all traces of her life as a woman of color in Little Rock.¹³⁵ Dr. Smith had been such an active contributor to African-American racial uplift that the act of severing all ties meant forging a future with no avenue for return.¹³⁶ And indeed, once Mrs. Smith left for Indianapolis in 1911, there was no further trace of who she was or what she became.¹³⁷

Price moved to Atlanta, Georgia, in September 1910, a few months after her father passed away.¹³⁸ There, she assumed the role of the head of the music department at Clark University (now Clark Atlanta University). Clark University presented itself as “a Christian school, founded in the year 1870 by the Freedman's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church ... open to students of all classes, and both sexes, the sole conditions of admission being a desire to learn, good moral character, and obedience to lawfully constituted authority.”¹³⁹ The school admitted students from the age of six and up and permitted boarding for those above the age of fourteen.¹⁴⁰ For older students pursuing higher education, the university offered two main courses of study: the Classical Course which led to a Bachelor of

¹³⁴ To pass as white was not simply a case of declaring one's own identity anew. To pass as white was to also declare a new identity for one's social circles and cultural practices, to unlearn and displace the societal mores and truths of one's upbringing with the constructed definition whiteness—a definition that, at this time, was calibrated by anti-blackness.

¹³⁵ Brown and Shirley, xx.

¹³⁶ Allyson Hobbs, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 4.

¹³⁷ Brown and Shirley, xx.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Clark University, “The Clark University Catalogue, 1911–1912,” *Clark College Catalogs*, accessed March 15, 2020,

<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.004.cc.catalogs%3A0018>

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Arts, and the Normal Course which led to a Diploma.¹⁴¹ Students on either the preparatory track of the Classical Course or the Normal Course received one period of music a week; the full Classical Course did not include music as part of its study.¹⁴² The announcements for 1911–12 saw a new event enter the calendar: a “Musicale” was scheduled for May 6, 1912 at 7:00 pm and would have likely seen Price’s involvement.¹⁴³ The university offered a more specialist track for music students that enabled them to enrol under the condition that “they devote at least four hours per day to music, and that they take at least one other subject prescribed by the head of the department of music.”¹⁴⁴

Table 2.3: Instrumental or vocal music expenses at Clark University.¹⁴⁵

Twenty lessons	\$5.00
Use of piano, one hour per day, per semester	\$1.50
Music Library fee, per semester	\$1.50

In the academic year of 1911–12, the number of students studying music via the preparatory Classical Course was 65 (55 male and 10 female); the number of students studying music via the Normal Course was 137 (all female); and the number of music specialists was 40 (1 male and 39 female).¹⁴⁶ The notably heavier presence of music in the academic lives of Clark University’s female students aligned with the significant rise of women in music across the United States.

Price returned to Little Rock in 1912 and married Thomas J. Price. Thomas Price, an ardent supporter of Booker T. Washington, hailed from New Haven, Connecticut.¹⁴⁷ He studied at the Howard University School of Law and graduated in 1906. Thomas Price’s

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ J. Clay Smith Jr., *Emancipation: The Making of the Black Lawyer, 1844–1944* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 327.

move to Little Rock was motivated by the pull of the “Great Negro state of the county.” Like Dr. Smith, he saw Little Rock as a city full for prospects for black professionals, so much so that he encouraged his peers to follow suit.¹⁴⁸ In 1908, Thomas Price was admitted to practice law in Arkansas by the Arkansas State Supreme Court. He went into partnership with Shorter College alumnus and eminent Little Rock lawyer Scipio Africanus Jones. Together, they took on one of the most well-known cases in Arkansas history, which stemmed from one of the deadliest racial conflicts in U.S. history.¹⁴⁹ The Elaine Race Riot of 1919 (also known as the Elaine Massacre) reportedly saw five white men murdered and eleven black men killed, although estimated numbers ranged into the high hundreds.¹⁵⁰ In the violent aftermath, Philips County grand jury charged 122 black men with the crime of inciting the race riots.¹⁵¹ Jones represented the first twelve black men convicted by the court; Thomas Price worked alongside Jones to secure their freedom. However, despite Thomas Price’s involvement in this case, his particular area was in business law and much of his career relied on this expertise.¹⁵²

The Prices had three children: Tommy (born shortly after their marriage), Florence Louise (born July 6, 1917), and Edith Cassandra (born March 29, 1921). Tommy died in infancy and Price composed an art song in his memory. The composition, “To My Little Son,” is a piece for voice and piano with words by Virginia-based writer Julia Johnson Davis.

To My Little Son

In your face I sometimes see
Shadowings of the man to be,

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ For a detailed contemporary account, see Ida B. Wells-Barnett, “The Arkansas Race Riot,” (N.p.: 1920.)

¹⁵⁰ O. A. Rogers Jr., “The Elaine Race Riots of 1919,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 19 (1960): 143.

¹⁵¹ Grif Stockley, “Elaine Massacre,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, last modified May 30, 2018, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=1102>.

¹⁵² Judith Kilpatrick, “Thomas Jewell Price,” *Arkansas Black Lawyers*, accessed June 23, 2018, <https://arkansasblacklawyers.uark.edu/lawyers/tjprice.html>.

And eager, dream of what my son shall be
Dream of what my son shall be
In twenty years and one.

When you are to manhood grown,
And all your manhood ways are known
Then I shall, blissful, try to trace
The child you once were in your face.¹⁵³

Composition began to find its way back into Price's life. In addition to this, Price had steadily built a solid portfolio as an educator. She provided private instruction in organ, piano, and violin and often composed her own material to suit her students' needs. Still, Price's qualifications and experience could easily be nullified by the color of her skin. When she applied for membership of the Arkansas State Music Teachers Association, she was rejected because of her race.¹⁵⁴ In a spirit of enterprise, however, Price established her own platform and founded the Little Rock Club of Musicians; this enabled her to program and perform her own compositions.¹⁵⁵

Price remained in the South until the late 1920s unlike her contemporary and childhood friend William Grant Still, who moved to Harlem in 1919. Harlem birthed a profusion of platforms for artistic and intellectual expression. *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* was one such platform. It was founded in 1923 and lived up to its name, offering a medium for African-American artists and authors who had traditionally been met with silence by mainstream avenues.¹⁵⁶ Wealthy Caribbean-descended Harlem resident and businessman

¹⁵³ Quoted in Florence Price, *Five Art Songs*, ed. Rae Linda Brown (Published for the Estate of Florence Price, 2011).

¹⁵⁴ Linda Holzer secured Price's posthumous recognition from the Arkansas State Music Teachers Association at a conference held on March 17–20, 2018. There, Florence Price was made a Music Teachers National Association Foundation Fellow. See Angelita Fallor, "Arkansas Composer Florence Price Honored by Organization who Denied Her Entry due to Her Race," last modified April, 11, 2018, <https://ualr.edu/news/2018/04/11/florence-price-justice/>.

¹⁵⁵ McKnight, "The Price of Admission."

¹⁵⁶ Sondra Kathryn Wilson, ed., *The Opportunity Reader: Stories, Poetry, and Essays from the Urban League's Opportunity Magazine*, (New York: Modern Library, 1999).

Casper Holstein donated \$1000 to *Opportunity* for the Holstein Prizes; this was awarded to composers for their winning submissions. Although Price did not visit Harlem at this time, news of the contest reached her, and, in 1926, Price was awarded second place in the Holstein competition for a piano suite called *In the Land O' Cotton*.

In the Land O' Cotton evokes images of rural antebellum life and conjures up plantation songs and dances. “At the Cotton Gin” opens the suite with a strongly pentatonic flavor, grounding the music in folk influences. Open-fifth chords, provided by the tonic and dominant in the key of A-flat major, reinforce the downbeats of the duple time signature while quartal harmonies, formed by the third and sixth degrees of the scale, skip between the downbeats in playful syncopation. A simple melodic theme emerges after two bars (example 2.1). Even when the supporting harmonies become more chromatic, the melody never loses its simplicity. The piece is in ternary form and uses the key of E major to emphasize the contrasting middle section. Therein, a new melodic idea is accompanied by a left-hand pattern that calls to mind the “oom-pah” rhythms that would have been created by slaves using alternating foot taps and claps (example 2.2).



Allegro

mp

Example 2.1: “At the Cotton Gin,” *In the Land O' Cotton*, bb. 1–6.



Example 2.2: “At the Cotton Gin,” *In the Land O' Cotton*, bb. 40–43.

The bittersweet nostalgia is amplified in “Dreaming.” Price marks the piece *andante con espressione*. This languid movement consists of a lyrical melody steeped in impressionist-leaning harmonies. The broken chord pattern that persists through much of the left-hand writing is very harp-like in its conception (example 2.3); Price’s use of whole-tone and chromatic colors reinforce the character of this reverie (example 2.4).



Example 2.3: “Dreaming,” *In the Land O’ Cotton*, bb. 1–2.



Example 2.4: “Dreaming,” *In the Land O’ Cotton*, bb. 18–21.

The third movement, “Song without Words,” possesses a hymn-like quality, akin to the chorales of Price’s religious upbringing with its use of chordal homophony and organ-inspired pedal points. It is as though Price, in the same vein as Burleigh, has arranged a spiritual for piano and solo voice; but in the absence of words, Price leaves her listener to draw meaning from its poignant melody (example 2.5).

Andantino Cantabile

Example 2.5: “Song without Words,” *In the Land O’ Cotton*, bb. 1–4.

In the Land O’ Cotton closes with the lively “Dance.” This piece is in rondo form and draws influence from the syncopated rhythms of plantation dances and jaunty pentatonic tunes of the slave fiddlers (example 2.6).

Allegro

con gioia

Example 2.6: “Dance,” *In the Land O’ Cotton*, bb. 1–4.

David Mannes, who judged the 1926 Holstein competition and was an active musician, conductor, and educator in New York, wrote: “For the second prize I would choose (No. 22), entitled ‘In the Land O’ Cotton’ four pieces for the pianoforte, charming compositions, simply and effectively written, especially the Dance.”¹⁵⁷ Price also achieved second place in the 1927 Holstein competition with a composition called *Memories of Dixie Land*.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Musical Scores. Keyboard. Piano, *In the Land O’ Cotton*: “At the Cotton Gin,” “Dreaming,” “Song Without Words,” and “Dance,” September 10, 1943. Ink and Pencil, Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a Series II, Box 18, Folder 4), Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

¹⁵⁸ Jackson, 36.

Between the years 1926 and 1927, Price had also been attending summer courses at the Chicago Musical College, honing her craft as a composer and educator. Price's transcript from the college shows that she completed courses in composition under Carl Busch in the summer of 1926 and under Wesley La Violette from 1926–1927.¹⁵⁹ Additionally, the transcript shows that in the summer of 1927, she pursued “Public School Music Methods” with an instructor she referred to as Miss Moench¹⁶⁰ and orchestration with La Violette.¹⁶¹ The Chicago Musical College was an affordable institution that, as depicted by Walker-Hill, “had excellent faculty who cared about their black students and took them seriously.”¹⁶² The college opened its doors to many African-American practitioners, including singer, pianist, composer, and music critic Nora Holt (1885–1974), who in 1918 became the first African-American person to attain a master's degree in music.¹⁶³ Other alumni included music educator Walter Henri Dyett (1901–1968) and baritone and music journalist Theodore Charles Stone (1912–1998).

Price's career as a composer, and particularly as an educator, had achieved a certain stability. Private instrumental teaching generated a steady flow of income. However, by the late 1920s, Thomas Price's law firm had started to decline in business.¹⁶⁴ The Prices' financial troubles were exacerbated by the emotional strain of rapidly deteriorating race relations. Tensions had continued to escalate in Arkansas after the 1919 race riots in Elaine. In 1927, the murder of a twelve-year-old local white girl had left many white residents seeking commensurate retribution. There was every reason for the Prices to fear for the lives of their two daughters; commensurate retribution seemed to hint at the targeting of affluent

¹⁵⁹ Academic Transcript, Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers (MC 988 Series I, Box 1, Folder 3).

¹⁶⁰ Correspondence, 1929–1953.

¹⁶¹ Academic Transcript.

¹⁶² Walker-Hill, “Black Women Composers in Chicago,” 7–8.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶⁴ Brown and Shirley, xxiv.

black children, girls in particular. 1927 also saw the lynching of an African-American man called John Carter, who was suspected of assaulting a white woman and her daughter.¹⁶⁵ Carter's torturous death was perhaps all the more harrowing because of its close proximity to Mr. Price's office. And so, in 1927, the Price family joined the Great Migration in a mass exodus that saw huge numbers of African Americans leave the southern states and head north and west.

The Chicago migration

The Prices' move to Chicago placed them in the demographic body of the black Southern Diaspora.¹⁶⁶ In the first decade of the twentieth century, the numbers of black southerners living outside of their southern origins stood at 335,200.¹⁶⁷ The out-migration of African-American southerners grew exponentially over the course of the next half-century. The black Southern Diaspora reached almost half a million by 1910, more than 750,000 by 1920, and over a million by 1930.¹⁶⁸ By this time, Price had fully integrated into the community of her new urban existence.

The black Southern Diaspora gravitated toward the country's most prominent industrial cities: New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Norfolk, and Washington, D.C. The pull of these cities was not just in the promise of further opportunities, but also in the prospects of greater political autonomy.¹⁶⁹ The out-migration of

¹⁶⁵ Brian D. Greer, "John Carter (Lynching Of)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, last modified May 9, 2018, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2289>.

¹⁶⁶ James N. Gregory identifies the "Southern Diaspora" as a term that first, captures the migrations of U.S. southerners between the 1900s and the 1970s, and second, belongs to a specific era of American and world history. See James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 11.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

the black Southern Diaspora evidenced both a demographic and ideological shift. If the turn of the century represented the time of Talented Tenth ideology and the politics of respectability and compromise in the rural south, the interwar years belonged to the philosophy of the New Negro and the activism of Race women intellectuals in their fervent pursuit of platforms and power in the urban north and west.

However, the Great Migration was also met with the challenges of the Great Depression, and the latter affected the Prices severely. Thomas Price struggled to find work in Chicago and his abuse toward his wife during this already troublesome period led to the demise of their marriage. In 1930, Thomas left their marital home and Florence filed for divorce soon after. Price later married Pusey Dell Arnett (1874–1957) in 1931, one month after her divorce from Thomas Price was finalized.¹⁷⁰ Arnett was known as P. D. Arnett and was born in Columbus, Ohio. He played baseball in the American Negro League and later became an insurance agent.¹⁷¹ He was widowed in 1927, but is thought to have had at least two children from that marriage.¹⁷² His union with Price was short-lived and they separated in 1934, though they remained legally married.¹⁷³ Price kept her surname throughout.

Despite the vicissitudes that rocked Price's transition to Chicago, she was, as Walker-Hill attests, "welcomed into a vital and nurturing community."¹⁷⁴ She also gained further experience as a composer and pedagogue through pursuing further study at the Chicago Teachers College, Chicago University, Central YMCA College, and Lewis Institute.¹⁷⁵ She enrolled in music courses at the American Conservatory of Music. There, she pursued

¹⁷⁰ Brown and Shirley, xxxi.

¹⁷¹ Gary Ashwell, "P. D. Arnett & the Chicago Unions," *Agate Type: Reconstructing Negro League and Latin American Baseball History*, May 22, 2016, http://agatetype.typepad.com/agate_type/2016/05/p-d-arnett-the-chicago-unions.html.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Brown and Shirley, xxxi.

¹⁷⁴ Walker-Hill, "Black Women Composers in Chicago," 9.

¹⁷⁵ Jackson, 36.

orchestration under Arthur Olaf Anderson and “Class Piano Normal Methods” under Mrs. Gail Martin Haske.¹⁷⁶ Northwestern University professor, German composer, and critic Dr. Albert Noelte additionally guided Price with critical feedback on her work. Price continued to attend courses at the Chicago Musical College.

The patrons of Chicago’s black artistic communities were Americans of African and European descent. They shared the belief that the advances of black men and women in the arts could dismantle white supremacy; their artistic achievements, they believed, would prove their vast intellectual and emotional capacity and validate the case for true liberation.¹⁷⁷ The Wanamaker family, in particular, was associated with northern philanthropy and white patronage and was committed to the cause of empowering oppressed communities, from the homeless in Philadelphia to the dwindling Native American population. Rodman Wanamaker’s sympathy for African Americans and his interest in their music spawned the Rodman Wanamaker Music Contests. These contests provided African-American composers with opportunities for greater recognition and operated in partnership with the National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM).¹⁷⁸ Upon entering the 1931 and 1932 Rodman Wanamaker Music Contests, Price entered a new phase in her compositional career.

The Wanamaker Era

The 1932 Rodman Wanamaker Music Contest signaled a new beginning for Price, particularly in light of the symphonic path she pursued thereafter and the high-profile opportunities that arose along the way. At the helm of this new beginning were the conditions of both the contest and its context, steering her musical direction toward large-scale

¹⁷⁶ Correspondence, 1929–1953.

¹⁷⁷ Samuel A. Floyd Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 106.

¹⁷⁸ Pronounced “Nam.”

composition and determining her position as an African-American composer caught in the ebb and flow of a highly segregated society.

Price was forty-six years of age when she entered the 1932 contest; she was not a nascent composer. Maude Roberts George wrote that “although [Price] has received many honors in her career at school as well as for her compositions, it is only now revealed since this major achievement”—i.e., her Wanamaker success.¹⁷⁹ The lack of public awareness was in part due to the fact that Price was “retiring” in her disposition and not one to boast of her achievements.¹⁸⁰

The financial rewards were a motivating factor for the composition of large-scale works. Price had, thus far, received income from publications of original pedagogical works, mostly of beginner to intermediate level. It was not financially viable for Price to invest time in composing large-scale works and depend upon their publication for a steady source of income.¹⁸¹ Very few of Price’s concert works were published during her lifetime.¹⁸² And so, with the 1932 submissions, a strategy was at play.

George emphasized the importance of funding in the progress of African-American composers. She stated that “if colored American composers are to reach the heights they should, greater financial encouragement is needed.”¹⁸³ George noted the great disparity between classical composers versus what she termed “the students of lighter music,” using William Dawson’s \$100 remuneration for a composition (“that likely cost him more than he received”) versus Duke Ellington’s \$2500 prize from the American Society of Composers

¹⁷⁹ Maude Roberts George, “News of the Music World,” *Chicago Defender*, October 15, 1932, 15.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Linda Holzer, “Selected Solo Piano Music of Florence B. Price (1887–1953),” D.Mus. diss., Florida State University, 1995, 9.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* 40

¹⁸³ “Sepia Composers in Need of Funds,” *Atlanta Daily World*, August 27, 1935, 2 and “‘Musicians Need New Angel’ Says Mrs. Maude George,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 31, 1935, A9.

and Writers for the song “Solitude” (that generated royalties) as a case in point.¹⁸⁴ George further asserted that if African-American composers were to develop major works then they required the financial means to make this both a feasible and rewarding endeavor. Immediate rewards and recognition provided composers of popular music with the necessary stability upon which to build a career; thus, similar financial encouragement was needed for African-American classical composers to realize their full potential.

The Wanamaker awards offered a clear incentive. The 1932 prizes totaled \$1000. In addition to this, Price submitted her orchestral works with the knowledge that the symphonic category of the 1931 Wanamaker contest had been carried over to the 1932 contest. This information was widely publicized and while the reasons for the carry-over were not, it is not implausible to postulate that a composer may have read this as an indication that stronger submissions were required. Either way, that is exactly what Price delivered and her efforts were duly rewarded. The combination of the extended deadline, a foot injury that limited her mobility, and the support of her musical community enabled Price to invest time in the completion of her large-scale submissions.

Price submitted at least four large-scale works, split between the 1932 piano solo and orchestral categories. The honorable mentions that she received for the three-movement orchestral suite *Ethiopia’s Shadow in America* and piano solo work *Fantasie Negre No. 4 in B minor* in addition to her two greater triumphs (the Sonata and Symphony in E minor) confirm this. These four expansive works marked a dramatic shift from the lighter character of previous submissions; they were also markedly more complex than many of her prior publications. Price’s Wanamaker successes, as a result, pushed her career to the heights that George had envisioned for African-American composers.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

The first Rodman Wanamaker Music Contest took place in 1927 and, from its inception, presented a rare platform for African-American composers of classical music. Though certainly not the only contests of their kind, it can hardly be said that such opportunities were commonplace. The Holstein awards and the William E. Harmon foundation award for Distinguished Achievement among Negroes, otherwise known as the Harmon Award, are perhaps the closest parallels. Yet, the aligning factors of time span, scope, and patronage positioned the Wanamaker awards at an optimal point in Price's career.

To compare, *Opportunity* magazine's Holstein awards were founded in 1924 and were originally conceived with only literary submissions in mind. A music category was introduced the following year.¹⁸⁵ The awards reached their zenith between the years of 1924 and 1927.¹⁸⁶ *Opportunity* editor Charles S. Johnson suspended the contests soon after the announcement of the 1927 winners and even though the magazine eventually returned to sponsor further contests, the momentum of its earlier period was lost. The declining readership and circulation of *Opportunity* toward the end of the 1920s was largely the cause. Sponsors began to redirect their funding elsewhere, which presented financial difficulties for Johnson and the magazine.¹⁸⁷ In 1928, Johnson left *Opportunity* and became Chairman of the Department of Social Sciences at Fisk University.¹⁸⁸

The Harmon awards ran parallel with the Holstein prizes and continued two years on from the demise of the latter. Unlike the Holstein awards, which grew from black patronage, the Harmon awards stemmed from white philanthropy. William E. Harmon (1862–1928) was drawn to the burgeoning African-American arts scene of 1920s Harlem. The Harmon awards

¹⁸⁵ Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance: A–J* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 252.

¹⁸⁶ Addell P. Austin, "The 'Opportunity' and 'Crisis' Literary Contests, 1924–1927," *CLA Journal* 31, no. 2 (1988): 244.

¹⁸⁷ Wintz and Finkelman, 701.

¹⁸⁸ Austin, 244.

took place between 1926 and 1930 and were administered by the foundation. Recipients included Burleigh, Dett, and Still, as well as Clarence Cameron White (1880–1960), Edward H. Margeston (1891–1962), J. Harold Brown (1909–1979), Harry Lawrence Freeman (1869–1954), Carl Rossini Diton (1886–1962), and Francis Hall Johnson (1888–1970). All of the aforementioned African-American practitioners were well established at the time of receiving their awards. Price, during this period, was not. Her lack of visibility at this point in her career placed the Harmon awards out of reach.

With the Wanamaker contests entering the frame immediately after the demise of the Holstein awards, and toward the tail end of the Harmon awards, newly emerging African-American composers now had an avenue that was exclusively centered on their craft. The Wanamaker awards were the product of white philanthropy and were robustly funded. The contests spotlighted the classical contributions of African-American composers who wrote in a black musical idiom. The national scope, combined with substantial monetary prizes, a lifelong connection to the distinguished Wanamaker name, and the likelihood of further recognition, made the contests a galvanizing force. They encouraged composers to pursue an artistry that may not have been accepted, much less rewarded, elsewhere. Opportunities such as the Holstein and Harmon awards had reached their end. Thus, it is quite possible that without the Wanamaker awards, the prospects of national and international recognition might have eluded Price altogether.

The Wanamaker name had long been associated with the patronage of the arts. Lewis Rodman Wanamaker (1863–1928), born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, keenly sponsored black musicians, while his father, John Wanamaker Sr. (1838–1922), oversaw the 1911 installation of the Wanamaker Grand Court Organ (the world's largest fully functioning pipe organ). However, the power and prestige behind the name also came from the pioneering success of the Wanamaker retail business. Wanamaker Sr., opened his first store in 1861 and

specialized in men's clothing. The store was called Oak Hall and went against the grain in rejecting haggling culture in favor of fixed prices.¹⁸⁹ In 1876, Wanamaker Sr. purchased an abandoned Pennsylvania Railroad depot and transformed it into one of the nation's first department stores. The store was named Wanamaker's. By the early twentieth century, Wanamaker Sr.'s business could truly be classed as both a national and international venture as he developed stores, beyond his native Philadelphia, in New York, London, and Paris. Rodman Wanamaker inherited the business in 1922 and further contributed to the cachet of the Wanamaker name through his own philanthropic efforts.

Rodman Wanamaker's support for black artistry encompassed more than the contests. He sponsored the orchestra of ragtime composer and bandleader James "Jim" Reese Europe (1880–1919). Rodman Wanamaker first became aware of Europe when the young and promising bandleader was employed to provide the music for Wanamaker's birthday celebrations in Atlantic City, New Jersey.¹⁹⁰ Europe presented a string quartet for the three-day affair. The performance was so well received that Europe became part of every celebration held by the Wanamaker family. When Europe passed away in 1919, Rodman Wanamaker and his family were present at the funeral and sat with Europe's family.¹⁹¹

Rodman Wanamaker's passing in 1928 was mourned in a eulogy by Evangeline Roberts of the *Chicago Defender*. The tribute proclaimed: "the name of Wanamaker has always exemplified the highest in material and educational achievements."¹⁹² The article referred to the Robert Curtis Ogden Association of the Philadelphia Wanamaker store, which played a key role in the development of the Wanamaker contests. The Ogden Association

¹⁸⁹ Andrew Maykuth, "John Wanamaker: A retailing innovator" *Maykuth*, accessed September 6, 2018, <http://www.maykuth.com/Archives/wana95.htm>.

¹⁹⁰ Reid Badger, *A Life in Ragtime: A Biography of James Reese Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 27.

¹⁹¹ Evangeline Roberts, "Mourn Death of Rodman Wanamaker," *Chicago Defender*, March 17, 1928, 3.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

comprised African-American employees and honored the belief of Robert Curtis Ogden (a white northern philanthropist and former associate of Wanamaker Sr.) that education and opportunity was owed to the descendants of slaves in order to atone for the past.¹⁹³ Each Rodman Wanamaker Contest took place under the auspices of this association.

The first Rodman Wanamaker Music Contest was announced at the eighth annual convention of NANM, which took place on July 25–31, 1926. Carl Diton was the president at that time and NANM’s Philadelphia branch hosted the week-long convention. The opening Sunday commenced with a “choirfest” that featured choirs from different denominations and a welcoming message from the clergymen.¹⁹⁴ The Monday program offered a formal welcome from the association, while the Tuesday program provided a matinee for children in addition to an evening performance.¹⁹⁵ Wednesday afternoon was filled with a showcase of new compositions by unknown composers, in contrast to the evening performance that was delivered by familiar faces from different branches of NANM.¹⁹⁶ On Thursday evening, a grand concert took place in the auditorium of the prestigious American Academy of Music.¹⁹⁷

On Friday, July 30, the Wanamaker store hosted a number of key events. Organist Melville Charlton (1880–1973) gave a morning and afternoon performance on the Wanamaker organ at the invitation of the Ogden Association. And later, African-American artists were broadcast from the Wanamaker Store between seven and eight o’clock in the evening, Eastern standard time.¹⁹⁸ It is not known exactly when the meeting between the NANM delegates and the Ogden Association occurred on the Friday program; however,

¹⁹³ *From Servitude to Service: Being the Old South Lectures on the History and Work of Southern Institutions for the Education of the Negro*, Boston American Unitarian Association (Cambridge: The University Press, 1905), v.

¹⁹⁴ George, “Music,” *Chicago Defender*, July 31, 1926, 3.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

records confirm that this meeting led to the announcement of the Wanamaker awards.¹⁹⁹ A Wanamaker representative declared: “the Robert Curtis Ogden [A]ssociation of the Wanamaker store, Philadelphia, in expression of its great interest and in the developing of that native gift and genius of music for entirely original composition will establish a series of awards.”²⁰⁰ NANM board member Maude Roberts George recalled the reaction of the attendees in “News of the Music World”: “The great thrill which went to the souls of the musicians brought forth one of the greatest spontaneous outbursts of applause and cheering ever heard from that artistic group. Mr. Wanamaker’s deep interest in the Race and its native gift of music prompted the awards.”²⁰¹

The inaugural 1927 contest received over 260 submissions countrywide.²⁰² Each submission aligned with one or more of the five classifications specified by Wanamaker Contest:

1—A Hymn of Freedom. This number to be a four or more part chorus either a capella, that is, without accompaniment or with accompaniment for orchestra or piano.

2—A Love Song. This may be a song for any voice, soprano, tenor, contralto, baritone or bass (but only for solo voice). The accompaniment may be for piano or orchestra. Or the composition may be a purely instrumental one for orchestra or solo instrument.

3—A Lullabye. This number may be in the form of a spiritual, either an old tune with a new harmonization or an original composition. But the form and character of a lullabye must be maintained. It may be, as in No. 2, vocal or instrumental.

4—A rhythmical step to be entitled “Prestidigitation.” A jig, dance or scherzo in any form for piano, band or orchestra.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ George, “News of the Music World,” October 1, 1932, 15.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Doris McGinty, ed., *A Documentary History of the National Association of Negro Musicians* (Chicago: Center for Black Music Research Columbia College Chicago, 2004), 38.

5—Melodies and Motifs of Synchronous Effects, that is, two or more melodies, either old ones or original, or both, worked together at the same time in the composition; a theme or melody with variations or elaborations in free form.²⁰³

The prizes totaled \$1000 and were divided into five awards per category: first prize was worth \$100, second was \$50, third was \$25, fourth was \$15 and fifth was \$10.²⁰⁴ Both the Ogden Association and NANM administered the awards to successful applicants. Composers were further guided by a set of ten rules of which most pertained to matters of presentation, legibility, submission processes, copyright and performance permissions. The fifth rule, however, stressed an idiomatic preference that read:

5—The employment of the Negro musical idiom melodically, rhythmically and harmonically will largely influence the judges in determining the winning compositions although quality of musical thought and workmanship will be the first consideration. The Negro idiom is preferable, but not necessary.²⁰⁵

This rule laid a clear blueprint for future submissions to follow. Despite the qualifying statement of the idiom being preferable, but not necessary, adjudicators were, no doubt, listening for the presence of a black musical idiom. The Wanamaker contests not only sought to prioritize works that interwove African, European, and New World musical narratives, they also empaneled practitioners who brought this interwoven aesthetic into their own craft.

The judges of the Wanamaker contest habitually formed an interracial panel, right from its inception. In the first year of the contest, the panel comprised Burleigh, Diton, and Clarence Cameron White alongside two white practitioners: official Wanamaker organist Charles M. Courboin and music editor of the *Philadelphia Ledger* Samuel Le Clar.²⁰⁶ For the 1932 contest, the judges were once again an integrated group, comprising black composer John Rosamond Johnson and organist Charlton and white composers Frank Black and

²⁰³ “Prizes for Negro Composes: Rodman Wanamaker Offers \$1,000 for Musicians of the Colored Race,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, March 2, 1927, 8.

²⁰⁴ McGinty, 38.

²⁰⁵ “R. Wanamaker Announces Rules in Contest,” *Chicago Defender*, February 19, 1927, 5.

²⁰⁶ McGinty, 38.

William T. Timmings, band directors Edward B. Cullen and Arthur A. Rosander, and educator George P. Spangler.

Their decision-making helped to shape the subsequent wave of African-American composers. Price's 1932 successes secured her place within this generation and signaled wider possibilities for a black musical idiom. Prominent black composers and performers of this time felt that "the contests thus far [had] done much to gain recognition for Negro composers and to stimulate interest in their work."²⁰⁷ The contests had come to represent more than just a music competition: they were a history-making cultural event on a national scale.

The 1932 Rodman Wanamaker Music Contest marked the fifth in a series of annual awards. The *Chicago Defender* announced it as one that would "undoubtedly show the remarkable progress made in musical composition by this Race."²⁰⁸ Cash prizes were offered in three categories of composition: \$250 for Class I, a song with words; \$250 for Class II, a piano composition; and \$500 for Class IV, a symphonic work of no less than three movements. Class IV had been carried over from the 1931 categories to the July 15 deadline for the 1932 contest. It was stated that "any one of these musical compositions must be limited to not more than ten minutes duration," which, based on Price's sonata and symphony submissions, must have referred to the duration of each movement rather than the entire work.²⁰⁹ It was reported that "hundreds of manuscripts were submitted" by the deadline.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ "Chicago Women Capture Wanamaker Music Prizes," *New Journal and Guide*, October 1, 1932, 11.

²⁰⁸ "Wanamaker Offers Cash for Prize Musical Compositions," *Chicago Defender*, March 26, 1932, 3.

²⁰⁹ "Great Interest Shown In Wanamaker Contest: Music Compositions Must Be Submitted By July 15," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, July 2, 1932, 4.

²¹⁰ "Chicago Women Capture Wanamaker Music Prizes," *New Journal and Guide*, October 1, 1932, 11.

Margaret Bonds won the \$250 prize in the first category with a work entitled “The Sea Ghost.” Honorary mentions went to “Lamentation” by Eric Franker from Kansas City, Missouri, and to “Hymn of the Universe,” by G. Raymond Smith, Chicago.²¹¹ Price’s Sonata in E minor achieved first place in the second category, winning the \$250 award. Price’s *Fantasia Negre No. 4* received an honorable mention. Another honorable mention went to *Moon Revel* by Hugo Bornn from New York City.²¹² Price’s Symphony No. 1 in E minor took the grand prize of \$500 in the fourth category. Again, Price received an honorary mention for a second submission entitled *Ethiopia’s Shadow in America*. This programmatic work comprised three movements with the following descriptions: “Introduction and Allegretto: The Arrival of the Negro in American when first brought here as a slave,” “Andante: His Resignation and Faith,” and “Allegro: His Adaptation. A fusion of his native and acquired impulses.” Another honorary mention was extended to *Autumn Moods* by J. Harold Brown, Indianapolis, Indiana (who had also been the recipient of a Harmon award). The sonata and symphony represented Price’s first Wanamaker wins. She had received an honorable mention in the 1931 awards for a short intermediate-level piano composition called *Cotton Dance*, but her large-scale submissions to the 1932 awards evidently garnered greater attention from the judges.

Rodman Wanamaker did not live to witness the development of the contest beyond its first year. His son, Captain John Wanamaker Jr. (1890–1934), continued the contests in honor of his father’s legacy; but the death of Wanamaker Jr. brought an end to this era. The absence of the Wanamaker awards thereafter made the dearth of opportunity for African-American classical composers all the more palpable. The lack of financial backing for classical composers proved a contentious issue, especially when compared to the support received by

²¹¹ “Chicago Women Capture Wanamaker Music Prizes,” 11.

²¹² *Ibid.*

their contemporaries in the popular music realm. The issue reached the pages of both the *Atlanta Daily World* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*. The article in the *Atlanta Daily World* carried the heading “Sepia Composers in Need of Funds” (August 27, 1935) while a duplicate printed in the *Pittsburgh Courier* carried the title “‘Musicians Need New Angel’ Says Mrs. Maude George” (August 31, 1935). The absence of the Wanamaker contests was a momentous loss, as George, president of NANM at this time, lamented:

The NANM misses the encouragement of the Wanamaker Awards in music. During the period of the Wanamaker contests, musicians who thought they might win a prize were persuaded to devote more time than they ordinarily could to serious work. Composition flourished at that time. The symphony of Florence B. Price won a Wanamaker award.

Since the death of Mr. Wanamaker the association has sought in vain for a fund to set up as inducement to classical composition. The establishment of such a fund would mean much to the Negro and the musical literature of the United States.²¹³

The Wanamaker contests had sustained the musical activity of those first marginalized by race (and other intersecting factors) and further marginalized by their compositional pursuits in the classical sphere. The contests had borne a social significance and tremendous cultural weight that was poignantly felt in their absence.

²¹³ “Sepia Composers in Need of Funds,” and “‘Musicians Need New Angel’ Says Mrs. Maude George.”

Chapter Three

The “Virtual Agency” of the Vernacular in Price’s Sonata in E minor

We are even beginning to believe in the possibility of establishing a national musical idiom. We are waking up to the fact pregnant with possibilities that we already have a folk music in the Negro spirituals—music which is potent, poignant, compelling. It is simple heart music and therefore powerful. It runs the gamut of emotions spontaneously.

Price
Class Essay, 1938

The capacity of the Negro Spirituals to act, emote, and compel is long documented in the history of the genre, from its folk roots to its concertized flowerings. It was W.E.B. Du Bois who wrote of the cognitive shift in the hearings of black voices, declaring “the world listened half credulously until the Fisk Jubilee Singers sang the slave songs so deeply into the world’s heart that it can never wholly forget them again.”²¹⁴ Performance was key to realizing the expressive depths of the genre for, as Sandra Jean Graham observes, “[s]pirituals were songs that lived in performance not on paper. They lived in vibrant voices, local dialects, interactive communal singing, variable tunes and rhythms, and expressive body movement—none of which could be conveyed in a musical score.”²¹⁵ The material was born out of, and made unique by oral transmission.²¹⁶ With written notation, however, the *sui generis* qualities of African-American folk songs were boxed into theoretical systems that were never constructed with this art form in mind. But performance bore and, I posit, still bears the potential to greatly enliven the folkloric character that is suggested in the score.

The actantial and expressive capacity of folk material, particularly when notated in the Western tradition and integrated into classical forms, intersects with both theory and praxis. It is in Robert S. Hatten’s conceptualization of “virtual agency” that I find the most

²¹⁴ W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 252.

²¹⁵ Sandra Jean Graham, 11.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

accommodating framework for the analysis and interpretation of Price’s folkloric influences.²¹⁷ Hatten does not equate virtual agency to actual agency; rather, he says that the efficiency of the virtual agent in music “lies in its capacity to simulate the actions, emotions, and reactions of a human agent.”²¹⁸ “More theoretically,” Hatten continues, “the virtual addresses the gap between music’s actual material or physical aspects as (organized) sound and those both irreducible emergent semiotic inferences that enable us to hear music as having movement, agency, emotional expression, and even subjectivity.”²¹⁹ As for performance, Hatten observes that “virtual agency can be reembodyed ... through the physical agencies of a sensitive performer” by drawing upon “intersubjective (shared) inferences that are stylistically and strategically warranted by specific features of a musical work.”²²⁰ Thus, an exploration into Price’s use of folk material is essentially a study in its virtual agency both within and beyond the score.

The spirituals are rooted in the vernacular, which, to quote Henry Louis Gates Jr., “is a word taken from the Latin *vernaculus* (‘native’), taken in turn from *verna* (‘slave born in his master’s house’).”²²¹ Its etymology parallels the journey of the African-American art form that, too, originated in the master’s house—which may be expanded to encompass the New

²¹⁷ Robert S. Hatten’s work interacts with wider scholarship on topic theory, which essentially provides a theoretical framework for understanding how musical materials can generate extra-musical signification in complex ways. For foundational texts on the subject, see Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classical Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994), Raymond Monelle, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic, 1992), and Eero Tarasti, *Myth and Music: A Semiotic Approach to the Aesthetics of Myth in Music, Especially That of Wagner, Sibelius, and Stravinsky* (Helsinki: Suomen Musiikkitieteellinen Suera, 1978), and Tarasti, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994)

²¹⁸ Robert S. Hatten, *A Theory of Virtual Agency for Western Art Music* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2018), 1.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²²¹ Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 5.

World. The black musical idioms and tropes that were crystalized in the spirituals can be traced to the earliest existence of forcibly displaced and subsequently newly diasporic Africans in colonial America. They are located in the songs, dances, rites, and rituals of an enslaved people striving to reclaim their actual agency. That the resultant art forms came to possess such strong virtual agency was inevitable for a genre that enacted creative freedoms in the most oppressive of social environments and gave a powerful musical language to the politically voiceless.²²²

Price carried the vernacular into a contemporary aesthetic that realized new and uplifting possibilities for a black idiomatic art music. She embraced what was contemporarily termed as a Negro musical idiom (referred to here as a black musical idiom). She wrote in resistance to the derogation of African-American expressive cultures, even as her wider social climate perpetuated thinking and listening practices that propagandized its lowly status. Price believed that an American national music could derive from the country's mixed heritages and histories in reflection of the country's own formation.²²³ Not all of her works engaged black musical idioms. As she acknowledged, some pieces simply incorporated folk-inflected melodic themes while others were completely devoid of these influences. But there were also compositions, especially large-scale instrumental works, which embedded the vernacular into their structural and organizing principles. There, we can assume that the vernacular holds deeper layers of significance and signification in order for it to have such prominence in the conceptualization of the work. Therefore, in the absence of lyrics and other forms of "verbal evidence" to inform our analytical and interpretative understanding, we may

²²² William C. Banfield, *Cultural Codes: Makings of a Black Music Philosophy* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2010), 7.

²²³ Florence Beatrice Price to Serge Koussevitzky, July 5, 1943, xxxv.

be encouraged to read into the vernacular as Price notated it as well as how we imagine she intended it in performance.²²⁴

My interest in applying this outlook to the Sonata in E minor stems from my background as a pianist and my performance history of the work. The work itself comprises three movements: “Andante-Allegro,” “Andante,” and “Scherzo.” They follow the sonata form, rondo form, and hybrid ternary-rondo form, respectively. My appreciation of Price’s compositional voice has hugely benefited from playing her music; my definition of her folkloric influences has expanded beyond the spirituals and become far more nuanced. Attention to Price’s use of dance rhythms is one such example of exploring her vernacular influences beyond song. Price had discussed the influence of folk dance in her orchestral music, particularly the pattin’ juba; therefore, it was not a surprise to find dance themes in the sonata without them having been explicitly labeled so. What has been illuminating is considering what it means to embody aspects of black antebellum dance and other forms of expressive physical movement both at the instrument and away from it. In exploring embodiment as a tool for deeper musico-cultural understanding, I have found that the virtual agency of Price’s vernacular inspirations meets with the “vitality,” as theorized by Alexandra Pierce, of kinetic associations.²²⁵ Physical movement and gesture are woven into the musical fabric of the sonata. As a result, embodiment—in theory or practice—can enter our analytical and interpretative approaches as a useful method.

Pierce’s notion of embodied interpretation is relevant to a work that musicalizes the oratorical and physical gestures derived from early African-American recreational and religious practices. The sonata is filled with bodily and vocal evocations that warrant a deeper investigation into the “kinetic orality” of African-American expressive culture, to borrow

²²⁴ Hatten, 7.

²²⁵ Alexandra Pierce, *Deepening Musical Performance through Movement: The Theory and Practice of Embodied Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 3.

Cornel West’s terminology, for this is as important a factor as learning the notes on the page.²²⁶ West identifies kinetic orality as the “dynamic repetitive and energetic rhetorical styles that form communities, e.g., antiphonal styles and linguistic innovations that accent fluid, improvisational identities.”²²⁷ These styles—communicated jointly “by word of mouth and by embodied musical gestures and formulas,” elaborates Kyra Gaunt—are built into Price’s aesthetic by virtue of the vernacular.²²⁸

I use Hatten’s theory of virtual agency as he intends: to construct a “semiotic bridge” between the “virtual energies” of the vernacular and the cultural and expressive meanings they hold for the listener.²²⁹ I include performance as a constant, interactive component as its (re)embodying function perpetually traverses this semiotic bridge. I highlight four focal areas across this three-movement work: the symbolism of the E-minor key and its foregrounding in the “Andante” section of “Andante-Allegro”; the thematic material that structures the sonata-form “Allegro” section of “Andante-Allegro”; the art-song spiritual influence behind “Andante”; and the signifyin(g) character of “Scherzo.” My attention to the way virtual agency transpires in these four areas further reveals how Price reconciled black folkloric traditions with classical conventions and vitalized her vision for a national musical idiom.

A note on performance histories (and futures)

Very little documentation exists around the performance history and critical reception of the Sonata in E minor in the immediate aftermath of its composition. “Composer Wins Noteworthy Prizes for Piano Sonata” ran the headline of a 1935 article in the *Chicago*

²²⁶ Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 93.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Kyra D. Gaunt, *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-dutch to Hip-hop* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 4.

²²⁹ Hatten, 18.

Defender, but the article itself contained no further reference to the work beyond its prize-winning status.²³⁰ Price performed the “Andante-Allegro” movement alongside her smaller work “Little Cabin Lullaby” from *Dances in the Canebrakes No. 1*.²³¹ This performance took place one Saturday afternoon in late June of 1933 at Kimball Hall. It belonged to a program of original compositions given by other prominent Chicago names including John Palmer, Price’s instructors Arthur Olaf Anderson and Leo Sowerby, and American Conservatory of Music faculty members Jeanne Boyd and Stella Roberts.²³² Outside of this, the extent to which the sonata interacted with and impacted concert culture is generally unknown.

The sonata remained unpublished during Price’s lifetime. It was not until 1997 that G. Schirmer, Inc. brought the sonata into publication with Rae Linda Brown as editor.²³³ Four years prior, Brown provided the liner notes for the first commercial recording of the Sonata in E minor; it is the opening piece on Althea Waites’ 1993 *Black Diamonds* album.²³⁴ The 2006 album *Soundscapes: Piano Music by African American Women* by Maria Thompson Corley presents the second commercial recording of the Sonata in E minor.²³⁵ My 2018 album, *Four Women: Music for Solo Piano by Price, Kaprálová, Bilsland and Bonds*, is the third. I hope that the insights that I provide below, derived from my recording and performance experience, can inspire dynamic performance futures for this historically and culturally significant contribution to solo piano repertoire.

The E-minor association

²³⁰ “Composer Wins Noteworthy Prizes for Piano Sonata,” *Chicago Defender*, May 4, 1935, 25.

²³¹ George, “News of the Music World,” *Chicago Defender*, June 24, 1933, 15.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ Brown also co-edited the 2008 publication of Symphony No. 1 in E minor and Price’s Symphony No. 3 in C minor in *Florence Price: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3*.

²³⁴ Althea Waites, *Black Diamonds* (Cambria CAMCD-1097, 1993), compact disc.

²³⁵ Maria Corley, *Soundscapes: Piano Music by African American Women* (Albany, TROY857, 2006), compact disc.

Walker-Hill ascribes the sonata to an “E minor phase” in the company of the Price’s first symphony and *Fantasia Negre No. 1 in E minor* for solo piano (1929).²³⁶ However, the designation of a phase suggests a distinct period in the chronology of Price’s catalogue and is, I argue, therefore a stretch—particularly with the inclusion of the first *Fantasia*. Price’s *Fantasia Negre No. 4 in B minor*, from her 1932 Wanamaker submission, counters the notion that Price forged a phase that was uniquely devoted to the exploration of this key. Her 1933 *Fantasia in G minor for Violin and Piano* further disrupts the idea. Yet, I agree with Walker-Hill that the seeming pervasiveness of E minor cannot be denied. I instead re-articulate Walker-Hill’s ascription as an E-minor association, which removes the issue of chronology and instead focuses on what makes this key such a striking and evocative aspect in Price’s music.

I interpret E minor as more than just a key signature and suggest that Price uses it to invoke the sonic landscape of the plantation. During the antebellum era, two of the most common folk instruments in the rural south were the fiddle and banjo.²³⁷ The tunings of the fiddle and banjo would have made plantation songs easy to perform in the key of E minor or upon modes that started on E. Even though Price’s music operates within the tonal framework of the Western classical tradition, her focus on E minor encourages me to reinterpret the key as a conduit for the modal atmosphere of a black vernacular sound world.

Sonata in the Aeolian mode on E is, at times, an accurate descriptor. Thinking in terms of modal atmosphere grants greater facility for me as a performer to contextualize aspects of Price’s sound in folk influences as well as to discern moments where Price is communicating musical ideas from outside of this atmosphere, or even bringing wider influences into it. Proceeding from the recognition of the E-minor association can equip the

²³⁶ Walker-Hill, “Music by Black Women Composers at the American Music Research Center,” *American Music Research Center Journal* 12, no. 1 (1992): 42.

²³⁷ Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 171.

prospective interpreter with the tools to read between the lines of the score and perform Price's idiomatic writing with an enriched awareness of her compositional intent and aesthetic foundation.

I begin by relating the E-minor association to the opening bars of the "Andante-Allegro" movement, particularly as the "Andante" introduction demonstrates the signature characteristics of the entire movement in microcosm. The twelve-bar opening foreshadows Price's continued use of modal atmospheres and chromatic coloration; original themes and motivic development; and vernacular tropology and lofty rhetoric. The E-minor association facilitates Price's oscillation from one to the other, as well as her integration of one within the other. The introduction, alone, serves as a crucial reminder that there are deeper layers of interpretation to excavate in the music.

The "Andante" introduction of "Andante-Allegro" opens with the dramatic declamation of the E-minor chord on the first beat of the first bar (rather similarly to *Fantasia Negre No. 1*). Price then immediately brings forth the modal atmosphere of African-American folk song with a simple melody that favors the flatted sixth and seventh degrees of the scale, and aligns with the Aeolian mode on E (example 3.1, bb. 1–3). The dotted rhythms of the theme imitate the trochaic meter found in many African-American folk songs; the dotted quaver evokes the length of a stressed syllable and the semiquaver acts as the unstressed syllable of a lyric.²³⁸ The melody is phrased like the first two lines of a stanza and rhythmically unfolds with the tetrameter/trimeter alternation that one might find in the verse of a plantation song.²³⁹ The parallels to folk song structure are all the more pronounced in

²³⁸ Ibid., 190.

²³⁹ The form draws similarities to Southern's analysis of the Negro Spiritual "O the Dying Lamb" as shown below:

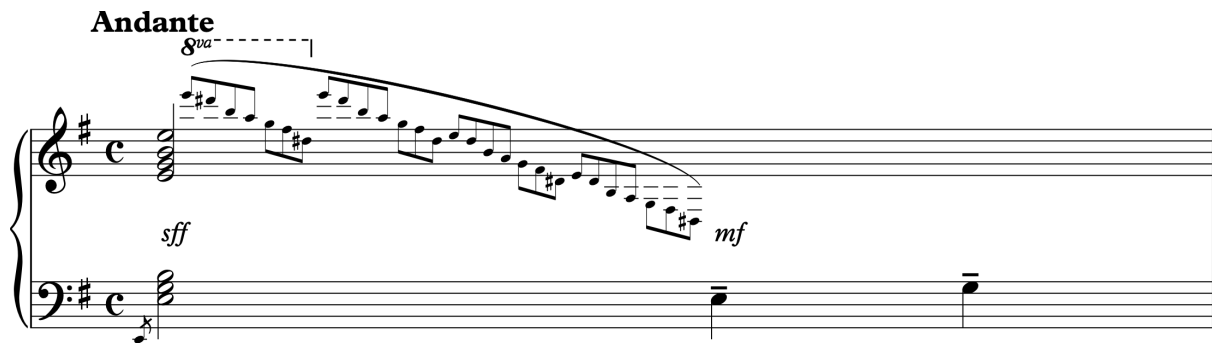
I wánt to gó where Móses tród,
Ó the dýing Lámb.
For Móses góne to the prómised laánd,

Price's re-statement of the theme. This time it appears in the dominant minor or, as it relates to the modal atmosphere, on the Aeolian on B. The two-part phrase with its continued tetrameter/trimeter alternation completes this lyric-less stanza with the evocation of lines three and four (example 3.1, bb. 4–6).

Example 3.1: “Andante-Allegro,” bb. 1–6.

The E-minor association in the sonata versus the fantasy generates an interesting point of comparison. Both proceed from the similar starting point of a strongly-sounded E-minor chord. However, while the sonata moves toward modality, *Fantasie Negre No. 1* bursts into a virtuosic cascading gesture; sharpened 7ths inflect the descending flourish and cement its minor identity (example 3.2).

Ó the dýing Lamb.
Ibid.



Example 3.2: *Fantasie Negre No. 1 in E minor, b. 1.*

In the sonata and the fantasy, the opening E-minor chord acts as a pivot into modal and tonal possibilities, respectively. Afterwards, Price exhibits contrasting approaches: the sonata (a piece that focuses on original themes) pivots instantly into the modal atmosphere of a black folkloric tradition while the fantasy (a piece that focuses on direct quotation) pivots straight away into the tonal framework of the classical tradition and invokes a dramatic gesture full of Romantic evocation. Is Price playing with expectation? How does she intend for the interpreter of the sonata to then communicate the remarkably idiomatic material that follows?

The first six bars of “Andante-Allegro” dramatize the black musical idiom. Thick chordal textures support the upper line; they punctuate almost every beat of this common-time passage and give a march-like weight to the opening. The martial overtones of the dotted rhythms simultaneously connote the heroic style. Yet, Price blends and blurs the European connotations, as heroes, too, abide in African-American folklore. These heroes were the manifestation of “collective hopes, aspirations and values.”²⁴⁰ Their narratives often entwined with the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of Scriptural heroes across the Old and New Testament, as slaves drew parallels with the vicissitudes of their lives.²⁴¹ Price’s solemn and ceremonial presentation of the “Andante” opening alludes to yet another symbol of the heroic: the fanfare of trumpets—a symbol that is meshed in both martial and spiritual

²⁴⁰Tolagbe Ogunleye, “African American Folklore: Its Role in Reconstructing African American History,” *Journal of Black Studies* 27 (1997): 447.

²⁴¹ Southern, 200

imagery. Price interlocks African-American “orature”²⁴² and European musical rhetoric as the key ingredients of a national flavor. Continuing on from the first six bars, the dotted configuration heard in the opening is then truncated to a dotted quaver and semi-quaver motif. This motif becomes the basis for the ensuing densely textured build-up. Here, Price temporarily leaves the modal atmosphere behind and progresses into a fast-moving chromaticism. The harmonic instability eventually settles as the passage arrives at an imperfect cadence and, in doing so, signals the end of the “Andante” introduction.

Waites’ and Corley’s recordings exemplify very different approaches to the introduction. Waites inclines toward the brisker side of the *andante* tempo marking while Corley adheres more closely to its unhurried implications. Waites’ deeper and weightier tone amplifies the heroic and shapes the introduction into a bold pseudo-rhapsodic display. Corley, on the other hand, favors a mellower tone where the accompanying harmonies are less strident and the melodic theme is more lyrical. I have always identified with Waites’ resolute introduction and its amplification of black orature. Pianistically speaking, it is, perhaps, a more familiar approach; her increasing momentum from one passage to the next is captivating from a listener’s perspective. However, my appreciation for Corley’s subdued introduction has grown significantly as I have come to better understand the E-minor association and its vernacular connections. The comparative lightness of Corley’s playing draws greater attention to the concert spiritual-style lyricism of the melodic theme. Even though Waites and Corley present two distinct approaches, I hear a cohesive school of interpretative thought across their renditions. Both excavate the black idiomatic influences of Price’s musical ideas and absorb them into their playing. As a result, I situate my interpretation in between Waites’ august heroism and Corley’s pensive *cantabile*.

²⁴² See Molefi K. Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

It is not unusual that Price should precede the exposition with an introduction—but in my analysis and interpretation of the work, I must ask why. The twelve-bar opening, as a formal function, can be traced to the conventions of Classical sonatas. The opening may be identified as a slow introduction, i.e., a section that “functions as a ‘before-the-beginning,’” as defined by William E. Caplin.²⁴³ Caplin’s definition continues, “a slow introduction typically invokes a solemn, serious tone, and yet it also arouses a strong sense of anticipation of the livelier character expressed by the rest of the movement.”²⁴⁴ There are clear parallels between this description and Price’s slow introduction. The twelve-bar opening allows the pianist to illuminate the modal atmosphere and craft a solemnity and seriousness around the foregrounded aspects of a black musical idiom without the dominating presence of a primary and secondary theme to contend with also. Could it be that Price is preparing the listener for the experience of hearing a distinct black vernacular language within a performance space that would have been conventionally racialized as white? Is she thus introducing black musical idioms in a relatively abstract way before the main materials of the music enter? My analysis assumes this to be the case and my performances explore these possibilities—both of which stem from the ways in which I frame the virtual agency of the E-minor association and conceptually situate the opening therein.

“Andante-Allegro”: Spiritual Themes I

Enveloped in the E-minor association, the first movement proceeds with themes that are imbued with the imagery, symbolism, and kinetic orality of African-American expressive culture. Price shapes her original themes against the backdrop of modal atmospheres and folkloric pentatonicism. Their evocations are multifaceted, multi-layered, and compelling.

²⁴³ William E. Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 203.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Price does not attempt to reinvent the sonata form with this movement. It is very straightforward in its unfolding: introduction (bb. 1–12); exposition (bb. 13–131); development (bb. 132–197); recapitulation (bb. 198–304). Rather, Price demonstrates the seamless integration of black musical idioms into the sonata form and underscores their authoritative position as the source material for her primary and secondary themes.

The themes delineate the exposition and inspire the music that follows, as expected. Beyond the modal and pentatonic framing of their melodies, the themes evoke early African-American folk songs and their subsequent concertized transformations. I apply the labels Spiritual Theme I and Spiritual Theme II to the primary theme (bb.13–28) and secondary theme (bb. 53–77), respectively. It is necessary to note that not all African-American folk songs were religious in nature and that I could adopt the broader designations of Plantation Themes I and II. However, my decision to interpret this thematic material along the lines of the spiritual stems from Price's own belief in the spirituals as the basis for a national music.²⁴⁵ Accordingly, my analysis of the primary and secondary themes evolves from this standpoint, as do my perspectives on the implications for interpretation.

²⁴⁵ Class Essays, 1938.

Allegro

Example 3.3: Spiritual Theme I in “Andante-Allegro,” bb. 13–28.

Spiritual Theme I (example 3.3) largely draws upon the Aeolian mode on E. The melody is invariably limited to the absolute pitches of the piano, which nullifies the potential to imitate the bent notes, melismas, and heterophonic textures of the early nineteenth-century spiritual. How, then, might one shape the melody in recognition of its cultural influences? We may explore beyond their modal and pentatonic frameworks to investigate the melodic contour and rhythmic character of the material. Both themes commence with an ascending melody. In the case of Spiritual Theme I, the ascent foregrounds the E-minor association with each iteration of the motif: bar 13 begins on E, bar 15 begins on G, and bar 17 begins on B and peaks with an E that is one octave above the starting note of the theme. The melodic contour, as well as the corresponding dynamic markings, suggest an intensity to the delivery of this passage (one that contrasts with the placid lyricism of the secondary theme). This description, however, presents a rigid step-like impression of the melodic shape. Using Pierce’s technique

to involve “arm contouring,” however, can lead us to enliven its virtual energy and bring us closer to enacting the vocal qualities of the folk singer.²⁴⁶ I illustrate my arm contouring of the melody below and superimpose it onto the score (example 3.4a and example 3.4b):



Example 3.4a: Arm contouring representation of Spiritual Theme I, bb. 13–20.

Example 3.4b: Arm contouring representation of Spiritual Theme I on the score, bb. 13–20.

Arm contouring captures the intent of my melodic flow in a way that the notation, alone, does not. With this method, we can allow the melody to take shape around a more vivid construal of a sung line. Of course, a musician cannot loop backwards in time, but the visual of the melody circling back on itself suggests to me moments where the interpretation calls for something a little bit different. This could include a sustained legato touch, a subtle rubato, or a slight change in tone production, to give a few examples. Spiritual Theme I is so rhythmically punchy that taking the time to just consider the melodic direction and contour creates the scope to break down the timbral and textural imitations in the piano writing.

Idiomatic cross-rhythms punctuate Spiritual Theme I. The crotchet-minim-crotchet configuration references common rhythmic features of African-American folk songs. The most well-known example can be found in the spiritual “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen,” which was also performed as “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Had” (example 3.5).

²⁴⁶ Pierce, 39.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Had". It consists of three staves. The top staff is a treble clef in common time (C) with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody is: No - bod - y knows de trou - ble I've had, with lyrics underneath. The second staff is labeled "Foot taps" and shows a rhythmic pattern of downbeats (indicated by downward arrows) and offbeats (indicated by upward arrows) corresponding to the lyrics. The third staff is labeled "Hand claps" and shows a rhythmic pattern of claps (indicated by 'x' marks) and offbeats (indicated by upward arrows) corresponding to the lyrics.

Example 3.5: A renotation of Eileen Southern’s “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Had” transcription with accompanying patten’ rhythms.²⁴⁷

The crotchet-minim-crotchet motif is found across a number of Price’s works. The rhythmic divisions may vary (e.g., quaver-crotchet-quaver or semiquaver-quaver-semiquaver), but the vernacular associations remain. Price’s accentuation of this motif in Spiritual Theme I indicates clearly how the interpreter should shape its rhythmic character. A suggestion for further (re)embodiment of the rhythm is to map a transcription such as Southern’s onto the body in order to better internalize the kinetic orality that the melodic theme draws upon.

The scope to explore the kinetic orality of Spiritual Theme I does not end with the melody. The accompaniment—a chordal homophonic texture that is partially integrated into the right hand—emphasizes the movement from the tonic to the dominant and, eventually, the tonic to the secondary dominant. The chords fall on the offbeat, but Price does not write the accompaniment as the kind of stride pattern one might see in a notated ragtime composition. The longer note values of the left-hand octaves obscure the typical percussiveness of an “oom-pah” stride pattern. The absorption of the offbeat chords into the right hand further indicates a move away from percussiveness. The resultant impression is more *alla marcia* than cakewalk and points to a mix of nineteenth-century inspiration and twentieth-century adaptation.

²⁴⁷ Southern, 196.

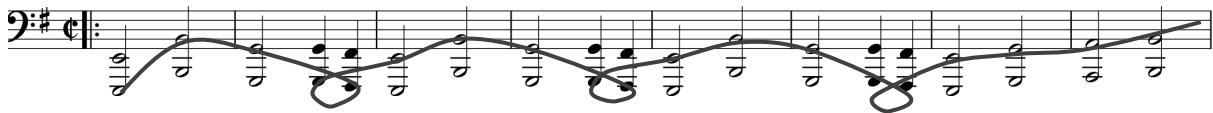
The *alla breve* time signature in conjunction with the *alla marcia* left-hand octaves allude to the marching rituals that bore literal and biblical significance in plantation life.²⁴⁸

The octaves circle round a tonic-dominant-mediant-supertonic-tonic progression that evokes a striking visual when read alongside the circling motions that characterized the ring shout.²⁴⁹

The left hand strongly alludes to patterns of physical movement, as my experiments with arm contouring illustrate (example 3.6a and example 3.6b):



Example 3.6a: Arm contouring representation of Spiritual I accompaniment, bb. 13–14.



Example 3.6b: Arm contouring representation of Spiritual I accompaniment on the score, bb. 13–20.

The circular motions of the left-hand octaves generate a sense of polarity with the ascending melody of the right hand; this contributes to the mounting tension of Spiritual Theme I.

Translating (re)embodied interpretations to the context of the piano enables the performer to experiment with different yet historically grounded possibilities for realizing this theme. The piano's advantages as a vehicle to explore the role of adaptation in Price's aesthetic counter its shortcomings as a vehicle to explore early folkloric authenticity. Her melodic, harmonic,

²⁴⁸ *Slave Songs of the United States* documents a hymn of North and South Carolina plantation origins entitled "These Are All My Father's Children." This solemn hymn was customarily sung at the funeral of the family patriarch and accompanied by marching. It was the custom that the patriarch's family would gather in the room that held the coffin, assemble around the coffin in order of age and relationship and sing the hymn while marching round in circular motions. See William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware and Lucy McKim Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: A. Simpson & Co., 1867), 101. See also David R. Roediger, "And Die in Dixie: Funerals, Death, & Heaven in the Slave Community 1700—1865," *The Massachusetts Review* 22, 1 (1989): 163–183.

²⁴⁹ See Floyd, "Ring Shout! Literary Studies, Historical Studies, and Black Music Inquiry," *Black Music Research Journal* 22 (2001): 49–70.

and rhythmic approaches to the theme allow the pianist to revel in the sonorous qualities of the instrument. The octave bassline, for instance, adds a textural depth that can absorb our impression of a collective, solemn march that paces the plaintive song above it. The performer can evoke traditions that sounded very different in their earlier contexts; through untapping their virtual agency, one can retain some of the symbolism and intersubjective inferences with which these earlier practices were imbued.

“Andante-Allegro”: Spiritual Themes II

The primary and secondary theme enact a tonic-submediant relationship that is macrocosmically displayed between the first and second movements of the sonata. The secondary theme enters after a twenty-five-bar transition. Although the transition begins on B major, through multiple modulations it later arrives at an imperfect cadence in anticipation of the new key: C major. The movement from the tonic to the submediant also macrocosmically displays the idiomatic movement of the pendular third.²⁵⁰ The secondary theme proceeds with an *allegretto* tempo marking. It uses the pentatonic scale in its lyrical unfolding, which, in turn, greatly facilitates its pendular third melodic progressions. As with the primary theme, Price supports the folk-inspired melody of this new theme with a more tonally-centered chordal accompaniment.

Price’s movement away from the E-minor association and into the pentatonic scale on C anchors the theme in other vernacular archetypes. The use of major or pentatonic scales in slave songs was clearly documented, but the “bright” and “cheery” connotations of these scales were confounded by the “plaintive” and “mournful” air that prevailed in their delivery.²⁵¹ The secondary theme captures this very poignancy, hence the designation of this

²⁵⁰ Pendular thirds have been traced from the New World manifestations of the African diaspora to their continental origins as discussed in Floyd, *The Power of Black Music*, 6.

²⁵¹ Southern, 192.

section as Spiritual Theme II. There are two fundamental techniques embedded in Price’s melodic and harmonic writing that, when highlighted, may shape a more sensitive interpretation. The first focuses on stanzaic approaches to the melody and the second illustrates allusions to water in the accompaniment.

Price applies a clear *aaab* stanzaic form to Spiritual Theme II, wherein the fourth line accommodates the notion of a refrain (example 3.7).²⁵²

Allegretto

C: I vi⁶ I vi⁶ I

58 vi⁶ I vi⁶ iii⁶ V⁹ I vi⁶

Example 3.7: Spiritual Theme II in “Andante-Allegro,” bb. 53–62.

While the first two notes of the root position C-major triad sound throughout most of this section, the top note of the triad rises from G to G# to A, and then lowers to Ab in a two-bar cycle that corresponds with the *aaa* component of the form. Here, the harmonies travel back and forth between the tonic and the submediant; the G# provides the leading note to A minor while its enharmonic equivalent of Ab provides the downwards resolution to the diatonic C-major triad. The harmonic accompaniment of the refrain moves through the mediant links of

²⁵² Ibid., 190.

C major to A minor, then E minor to the G major dominant 7th chord (with an added 9th). This progression elides into the second iteration—elision is yet another idiomatic technique.

I situate this analysis alongside an interpretation that seeks to unveil the virtual agency of the chordal progression's forward-and-backward momentum. The continuous swell of augmented and diminished intervals, combined with both the steady oscillation between the major and relative minor and the pendular behavior of the mediant links, conjures up one of the most pervasive themes amongst the spirituals: water. As Southern writes, song texts were replete with allusions to water “—particularly to the Jordan river or the stream or banks—and to the boats that sail on the water, or to ships—particularly the Ship of Zion.”²⁵³ I imagine Price's C pedal points (marked *il basso legato*) as connoting an expanse of water, particularly as I prefer to sustain the note through the bar so that it also has a grounding effect beneath the changing harmonies; the textures above in the bass clef, in conjunction with the specific *crescendo-diminuendo* instruction Price gives, imitate the pattern of waves curling, breaking, and receding. The harmonic ebb and flow that Spiritual Theme II assumes therefore reveals a deeper tropological significance that can be absorbed into our pianism.

“Andante” as art song

“Andante” invokes the concert spiritual and three distinctive components of Burleigh's approach to the genre.²⁵⁴ Burleigh's contributions engendered a new and modern reinterpretation of the traditional spiritual. He brought to a vernacular musical language a present-day pertinence that spoke to the circumstances of contemporary American life. His

²⁵³ Ibid., 199.

²⁵⁴ Jean Snyder shared Rae Linda Brown's unpublished 2003 presentation with me (with Brown's permission) titled, “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings’: Harry T. Burleigh's Influence on Florence B. Price.” The contents largely pertained to Burleigh's influence on Price's art song contributions and inspired me to observe his legacy more closely in her music for solo piano.

style signaled African-American-authored directions for an American national music, of which numerous black composers—including Price—took note. The new art-song spiritual of the early twentieth century was inextricably tied to the ambitions of racial uplift. This compositional legacy no doubt resides in Price’s aesthetic. Price was well versed in the art song spiritual genre; art songs and spiritual arrangements formed an important part of her catalogue—increasingly so over the course of the 1930s and 40s. Price’s modeling of “Andante” on this genre enables us to investigate a period in the spiritual’s cultural transformation where notation was a key part of its identity, and where African-American composers, performers, and scholars of the genre gave contemporaneous commentary on the vernacular and formal features of the style.

“Andante” moves into the key of C major, as anticipated in Spiritual Theme II. The continuity between the first and second movement does not stop there. The melodic theme of “Andante” is an amalgamation of Spiritual Themes I and II; I label it Spiritual Theme III (see example 3.10). The crotchet-minim-crotchet configuration of Spiritual Theme I undergoes a process of diminution to form the semiquaver-quaver-semiquaver motif of the new “Andante” theme. The theme retains the pentatonicism of Spiritual Theme II as well as its pendular third melodic progressions and mediant and submediant harmonic links. However, the tempo marking demonstrates a clear point of departure from the first movement. Its temporal framework enables greater scope for the pianist to delve deeper into the *cantabile* qualities of Price’s original themes. As I read between the lines of the score and enact the virtual energies of this movement, I incline more and more toward the concept of interpreting “Andante” as an art song.

Rae Linda Brown depicts “Andante” as a rondo-form movement that “begins with a lyrical tune reminiscent of the spiritual. It is treated with characteristic syncopated rhythms and simple harmony. The two episodes, more classical in orientation, are reminiscent of

Chopin and Schumann, respectively.”²⁵⁵ Drawing upon Brown’s summary, I map out the overall form, character, and harmonic outline of the movement.

Table 3.1: Formal outline, “Andante.”

A:	C-major refrain, i.e., Spiritual Theme III	bb. 1–20
B:	A-minor episode, i.e., Chopin Theme	bb. 21–38
A:	C-major refrain, i.e., Spiritual Theme III	bb. 29–49
C:	E-minor episode, i.e., Schumann Theme	bb. 50–80
A:	C-major refrain, i.e., Spiritual Theme III	bb. 81–102

Brown’s designations of the themes allude to a sense of musical code-switching. The term code-switching has its origins in sociolinguistics and depicts the process of bilingual or multilingual speakers alternating between two or more languages. The term is applied here in a way that invokes the processes of code-switching in African-American communities—this may entail alternating between vernacular and formal modes of expression depending upon the context. Though the use of the term has gained momentum in recent years, the concept is embedded in Talented Tenth ideology and notions of racial uplift that continued through the first half of the twentieth century. In the same way that the role of code-switching in the path toward racial uplift cannot simply be reduced to the simplistic definition of educated African Americans wanting to be white, Price’s musical code-switching between an African-American vernacular and a European-derived language also represents something far more complex.

Lawrence Schenbeck asserts that “when we realize that another component of uplift was its search for ways to construct and represent a positive black identity, both for African Americans and as a means of transforming the deep racism of the broader culture, we can see

²⁵⁵ Florence Price, *Sonata in E Minor for Piano*, ed. Rae Linda Brown (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1997).

the error of such simplistic dismissals of the strategy.”²⁵⁶ This strategy transpired even earlier in the late nineteenth-century formation of the concert spiritual. The concertized genre distinguished itself from the folk spiritual and the parodies of blackface minstrelsy by prioritizing standard English over dialect, and a homogeneous sound ideal over a heterogeneous one.²⁵⁷ This strategy sought to give value to the folk origins and originators while also attributing new meaning and pertinence to its position in a post-slavery era heading into the dominance of Jim Crow. Price’s musical code-switching emanates from these intricate, complex histories.

Much like linguistic-oriented code-switching, wherein the alternations depend upon context, Price demonstrates a similar process between the contexts of the refrains and episodes of the rondo form. “Andante” proves conducive for the technique of musical code-switching: it is structured to accommodate contrasts, yet it is utterly cohesive as a self-contained form. The refrains also exhibit the code-switching transformations of the folk spiritual (as is soon explored) but with the episodes leaning further into a classical orientation, there is much to glean from the linear code-switching across sections.

The Chopin Theme (example 3.8) contains a delicate melodic line that is decorated with upper mordent ornamentation and supported by a light accompaniment; it unfolds with the miniature-like concentration of mood found in a Chopin prelude.

Più mosso

Example 3.8: Chopin Theme in “Andante,” bb. 21–24.

²⁵⁶ Schenbeck, 6.

²⁵⁷ Graham, 71–73.

The Schumann Theme (example 3.9) contains a thickening of the tripartite texture (i.e., the bass line, inner chords, and main melody) across the wider range of the instrument, and is additionally typified by the rhythmic tension between its 4/8 outer voices and sextuplet inner harmonies. The textural density and cross-rhythmic complexity is reminiscent of Schumann and his peers.

Example 3.9: Schumann Theme in “Andante,” bb. 50–53.

As with “Andante-Allegro,” Price positions the spiritual-inspired melody as the main theme as if, again, stating its authoritative position as a key compositional (re)source. She code-switches with ease into the Romantic languages of Chopin and Schumann as these languages inhere just as authentically within her own compositional voice. However, what compels me to conceptualize “Andante” as art song are the layered, intra-sectional approaches to code switching that abide within the refrains themselves and not just the linear approaches between sections. As Brown highlights, the opening melody evokes the spiritual sound world, but this world is multi-dimensional. Folk origins, concertized adaptations, and pianistic innovations bring the refrain into fruition.

The first four bars of “Andante” present a tight-knit theme and the basis of Spiritual Theme III (example 3.10):

Basic idea	Repetition	Continuation	Cadence
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Andante

C: I VI III (V/V) V I IV VI V I
Perfect Cadence

Example 3.10: Spiritual Theme III in “Andante,” bb. 1–4.

The notes of the pentatonic scale guide the recurring ascending melodic contour. A steady harmonic rhythm supports in a diatonic framework and straightforwardly homophonic texture. Spiritual Theme III is redolent of Burleigh’s influence. A comparison of the rondo theme with Burleigh’s 1917 arrangement of the Negro Spiritual “By an’ By” illuminates instances of how Price builds upon his aesthetic (example 3.11).

Basic idea

Andante

Voice: *f* Oh, by an' by,

Piano: *f* *p* *f*

A-flat: I V I I (V/IV)

Repetition Continuation Cadence

4
Voice: by an' by I'm goin' to lay down dis heav-y load. Oh,

Pno.

IV⁶₄ I VI V III (V/IV) IV I
Plagal Cadence

Example 3.11: “By an’ By,” Harry T. Burleigh (arr.), bb. 1–6.

Direct parallels emerge between the rondo theme and the opening bars of the “By an’ By” vocal line. To illustrate, the melody comprises the notes of the pentatonic scale, this time on Ab. The melody is rhythmically shaped by the familiar quaver-crotchet-quaver configuration. Additionally, the structure of the theme (basic idea-repetition-continuation-cadence) shares a bar-by-bar likeness to the rondo theme. Spiritual Theme III is undoubtedly modeled on the melodic traits of its folk origins, but it also bears the hallmarks of the concert spiritual genre that epitomized Burleigh’s style. Price’s melodic and harmonic approaches strongly reflect

the continuation of an African-American compositional tradition to which Burleigh's spiritual arrangements are central. The evident trail of connectivity and continuity is explored below: three distinctive aspects of Burleigh's approach (as identified by Olly Wilson) concerning melodic approaches, the role of the accompaniment and harmonic function, are interpreted against Spiritual Theme III and its unfolding through the wider refrain.

1. "Burleigh always gives hegemony to the original spiritual's vocal line in its relationship to the piano accompaniment."²⁵⁸

The simple piano accompaniment of the four-bar rondo theme clearly gives hegemony to the melodic line. The accompanying homophonic texture is noticeably pared down in comparison with the deep octaves and mid-register chords of Spiritual Theme I or the pedal point and ever-undulating chords of Spiritual Theme II. The relative sparseness of the rondo theme accompaniment generates greater exploration of a concert spiritual-inspired *cantabile* tone. Price foregrounds this intention with the clear instruction of slurs that indicate the prioritization of an unbroken legato and dynamic markings that imitate the organic vocal swell of the art-song interpreter.

Price's choice of dynamics guides the pianist on the subtle gradations of tone required to achieve a warm *cantabile* resonance. The first note of the melody is an A that sits atop a C-major chord and is set apart by its gentle dissonance. The *mp* dynamic marking bears the tacit implication that the chords will sound a dimmer shade of *mp* for the melody to retain its hegemony. Price indicates a gradual build in intensity with a *crescendo* through the second bar that corresponds with the climbing melodic contour. Its peak is matched with a *mf* marking and the ensuing *diminuendo* mirrors the descending melodic line. The *p* marking in the cadential bar imitates the tone control of a vocalist and rounds off this highly lyrical theme. Price's dynamic instructions encourage the pianist to attend to the finer details of tone

²⁵⁸ Olly Wilson, "Composition from the Perspective of the African-American Tradition," *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (1973): 47.

production. The dynamic range of the first four bars is not very expansive and therefore demands the subtlest gradations of tone and the most delicate balance of sonorities.

2. “The accompaniment often serves as a second voice that establishes an antiphonal or call-and-response relationship with the soloist, often filling the gaps at the ends of phrases with appropriate countermelodies as is often the case in the communal vernacular spirituals.”²⁵⁹

A second iteration of the theme follows the four-bar opening, spanning bars 5–10 (example 3.12). Additional vernacular tropes come to the fore as Price enacts further concertized and pianistic adaptations of the spiritual’s improvisatory origins and of the communal involvement embedded in its performance practice. She introduces countermelodies that simultaneously maintain the hegemony of the theme while interacting with it and elaborating around it. The interactions generate an antiphonal relationship between the lines and imitate the vernacular practice of call-and-response, which Samuel A. Floyd Jr. labels the “master-trope, the musical trope of tropes.”²⁶⁰ The elaborations invite semblances of heterophony into the texture. They reflect the presence of additional voices in the communal setting, whose contributions were neither in unison nor in true polyphony, but in accordance with the singers’ self-determined freedom to follow or depart from the main melodic direction. However, the piano timbre pulls the tone into the homogenous sound ideal of the concert spiritual.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Floyd, *The Power of Black Music*, 95.

Example 3.12: “Andante,” bb. 5–10.

As Price engages more black idiomatic tropes in the right-hand, the dynamic range rises to *f* on two occasions while the left-hand intensifies in its pianism. Arpeggiated figures, extended chords, and chromatic harmonies move the accompaniment on from its simple, diatonic beginnings. The more adventurous harmonic writing results in the passage extending to six bars, rather than the original four bars of the opening theme. But even with the increased complexity of the left-hand part, the written accompaniment never loses sight of its essential harmonic function in relation to the melodic line, which leads to the third and final point of comparison.

3. “The choice of harmonies is guided by the use of chords that appropriately support the modal implications of the original spirituals.”²⁶¹

Wilson highlights how Burleigh’s chromaticism “is used primarily in the service of the overreaching diatonic, harmonic implications or as a color device or melodic overlay (usually

²⁶¹ Ibid.

a descending chromatic scale fragment) rather than a structural element.”²⁶² Similar approaches can be identified in the second iteration. In bar 7, Price presents the C-major chord with a flatted 7th which renders it the secondary dominant of the succeeding subdominant and further assists with the harmonic progression of this bar. In bar 8, the overlay of the descending chromatic chords and the brief visit to the flatted 7th chord do not compromise the pentatonic melody. The melodic theme maintains its hegemonic position within the encasing chromatic colors. As the cadential passage approaches, the chain of secondary dominants in bar 9 ultimately sounds in service of the upcoming perfect cadence in bar 10.

“Andante” no doubt pays tribute to the concert spiritual genre and even, perhaps, to Burleigh as one of its key innovators. The *cantabile* style of the movement is infused with influences from both the spiritual’s vernacular origin and its concertized transformation. Price adapts the style and gives the piano a voice in its development. As I (re)embody the black concert spiritual tradition in piano performance, I am encouraged to remember the role that innovation once played in its transformation and to embrace the necessary creativity that comes with reinterpreting this tradition in a purely instrumental context.

The Signifyin(g) “Scherzo”

“Scherzo” exhibits some of Price’s most challenging writing for solo piano, as well as some of her most stylistically varied. I re-examine the playful connotations of the term *scherzo* and analyze this movement through a lens that magnifies the role of signifyin(g), i.e., what Gates terms “the black trope of tropes.”²⁶³ Signifyin(g), Floyd elaborates, is “a way of demonstrating respect for, goading, or poking fun at a musical style, process, or practice

²⁶² Wilson, 47.

²⁶³ Gates, 56–57.

through parody, pastiche, implication, indirection, humor, tone- or word-play, the illusions of speech or narration, and other troping mechanisms.”²⁶⁴ I posit that this vernacular trope forms a key aspect of this movement’s virtual agency; I re-frame the closing as the signifyin(g) “Scherzo.”

The final movement of the sonata combines two sectional forms. The first exemplifies a 6/8 ternary form and the second is a much longer 4/8 rondo. The outline of this hybrid movement is shown below.

Table 3.2: Formal outline, “Scherzo.”

Section 1	bb. 1–153
A:	E-minor <i>Allegro</i> refrain (bb. 1–82)
B:	E-major <i>Cantabile maestoso</i> contrasting middle (bb. 83–121)
A:	E-major <i>Allegro</i> refrain (bb. 122–153)
Section 2	bb. 154–371
C:	E-minor refrain (bb. 154–183)
D:	C-major episode (bb. 184–197)
C:	E-minor refrain (bb. 198–224)
E:	G-major episode (bb. 225–260)
C:	E-minor refrain (bb. 261–290)
D:	E-major episode (bb. 291–317)
C:	E-minor refrain, extended (bb. 318–371)

Historically, a ternary form scherzo often unfolded in triple meter and usually occupied the third movement of a sonata, symphony, or string quartet. Price’s “Scherzo” begins in line with the historical precedent. But after 153 bars of what appears to be a very conventional approach, Price shifts to a different theme in a different time signature and initiates a completely new form that hardly references the themes of the 6/8 section. Price exhibits a type of musical misdirection as she leads the listener along an established path and then takes an unexpected turn.

²⁶⁴ Floyd, “Ring Shout! Literary Studies, Historical Studies, and Black Music Inquiry,” 54.

Price tropes on what is already signified by the word “scherzo” (i.e., an Italian word that translates to “jest,” “joke,” or “game” and a musical term that is often attributed to a light and lively triple time, ternary form movement within a large-scale work). In the process of signifyin(g), the signifier—“scherzo”—remains the same. However, the signified is displaced by rhetorical figures that infuse “Scherzo” with what Gates depicts as “black double-voicedness; because it always entails a formal revision and an intertextual relation.”²⁶⁵ Price’s musical misdirection exemplifies formal revision to the expectations of the scherzo. The scherzo is already a vehicle for humour, but Price playfully doubles and redoubles its definitions.

As I (re)embody the signifyin(g) character of the “Scherzo,” I aim to revel in the sharp twists and turns of the movement, rather than push a forced sense of continuity throughout. I find this to be especially true for the *cantabile maestoso* contrasting middle (bb. 83–121). Here, Price breaks from the E-minor association that opens the movement. The enmeshed modal atmosphere and minor key of the refrain (example 3.13) is juxtaposed against a new E-major moment that contributes fresh tonal color to the sonata (example 3.14). Price code-switches to the influence of late Romanticism. However, the contrasting middle portrays thirty-nine bars of revision, re-presentation, and re-definition. I seek to pronounce this in my performances.

Allegro

Piano

Example 3.13: “Scherzo,” bb. 1–4.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 56.

Allegro

Piano

mf

87

Pno.

mf

p

cresc. poco a poco

Example 3.14: “Scherzo,” bb. 83–91.

Price revises the parameters of agency and ownership in the Romantic tradition by employing rhetorical figures that blur the lines of pastiche and parody. She uses octave displacement in the melodic line (bar 85) to convey an almost operatic pathos; she prolongs the decorative gestures of the countermelody (see, for example, the descending rotational figures that extend across bars 88–90 beyond the end of the opening melody); and she encourages the push and pull of tempo, as indicated by frequent *ritardando* and *a tempo* markings (and the rubato that is implied in between). These rhetorical figures exaggerate the Romantic expressivity of the passage. However, the *cantabile maestoso* contrasting middle also recalls the strong, majestic style of the “Andante-Allegro” introduction. Similar to the bold declamation of the introduction, Price commences with a firm statement of the E-major chord from which her three-part texture advances (example 3.14). The lyrical melodic line, florid countermelody, and harmonically grounding octaves and lower registers reflect the textural and timbral intricacies of Price’s compositional voice. Price re-defines the exclusionary racial and gendered preconceptions of this aesthetic.

Indeed, the sonorous pedal points, swelling triplet figurations in the inner voice and recitative-like unmeasured fluidity of the melodic line also recall the late Romantic voices of the European tradition. However, Price's voice is framed in the uplift of the black musical idiom; she subverts the caricature and exaggeration often projected onto forms of African-American cultural production and re-directs them to European compositional aesthetics. Though the signifyin(g) contrasting middle exhibits more respect than ridicule toward the classical tradition, in subverting the placement of caricature and exaggeration, Price forces re-definitions of early twentieth-century African-American musical identities in the American musical landscape. The contrasting middle presents a moment of indulgence that, when explored, can serve to heighten the musical misdirection of the code-switch and to show off the wider palette of the instrument, the performer, and the composer.

As "Scherzo" moves into the rondo half of the movement, Price delves deeper into the recreational music of African-American rural pasts. My performance approaches aim to evoke the vitality of this musico-cultural history. The first rondo refrain launches the listener into the sound world of black antebellum dance (example 3.15).²⁶⁶ Price anchors the rondo in the dance connotations of the classical form, but she resituates the dance influences in an African-American folkloric heritage.

²⁶⁶ Price, *Sonata in E Minor for Piano*.

Allegro

Example 3.15: Rondo refrain in “Scherzo,” bb. 153–163.

Unlike the spiritual themes of “Andante-Allegro” and “Andante,” the melodic line of the rondo here is rather more instrumental in its conception. Perhaps Price had the black antebellum fiddler in mind as she wrote this highly rhythmic theme. Southern’s documentation lends credence to this supposition. She observes that “all contemporary accounts of slave dancing emphasize its vigor and vitality” and that slave fiddlers were actively involved in pioneering methods to shape the musical style.²⁶⁷ For instance:

A boy would stand behind the fiddler with a pair of knitting needles in his hands. From this position the youngster would reach around the fiddler’s left shoulder and beat on the strings in the manner of a snare drummer.²⁶⁸

Southern adds that the fiddler would sing and stomp his feet in a pattern that coordinated the left heel with the right forefoot and alternated with the right heel and left forefoot to accentuate the four beats of a bar.²⁶⁹ The rondo theme alludes to these influences: the right-hand melody embodies the vigour and vitality of a fiddler’s tune while the left-hand stride, in conjunction with the off-beat chords in the right-hand, conjures up the heavier and lighter layers of the fiddler’s percussive accompaniment. Price further connects the theme to the

²⁶⁷ Southern, 167–168.

²⁶⁸ W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 5 quoted in Southern, 168.

²⁶⁹ Southern, 168.

plantation sound world by, again, reinforcing the Aeolian on E and crafting the melodic contour around characteristic pendular thirds. Envisioning a human enactment of this section and mapping ideas of what these motions might look (and feel) like on the body can assist the performer in more deeply internalizing the kinetic character of this theme.

After the first refrain, Price recalls the “Andante” theme in the C-major episode of “Scherzo” (example 3.16). The theme also re-surfaces as an episode in E major (example 3.17).

The musical score for Example 3.16 is for Piano, marked "Andantino" and "mf". It consists of four measures. The right hand plays a pentatonic melody in C major, starting on C4 and moving up stepwise to G4, with a slur over the first two measures. The left hand provides a bass line with chords and single notes, primarily using the notes C, E, and G.

Example 3.16: First rondo episode in “Scherzo,” bb. 184–187.

The musical score for Example 3.17 is for Piano, marked "Andantino" and "mp". It consists of four measures. The right hand plays a pentatonic melody in E major, starting on E4 and moving up stepwise to B4, with a slur over the first two measures. The left hand provides a bass line with chords and single notes, primarily using the notes E, G, and B.

Example 3.17: Third rondo episode in “Scherzo,” bb. 291–294.

I interpret the pentatonic theme on C as a musical signifier that surfaces in three manifestations throughout the sonata. The first manifestation bears an anticipatory function as Price foreshadows its appearance with the Spiritual Theme II of “Andante-Allegro.” The second manifestation bears an important structural role as Price centres its position as the rondo theme of “Andante.” The final manifestation in “Scherzo” engages in an act of self-referential signifyin(g): Price evokes past manifestations but, this time, presents the theme as a short episode rather than a central idea. Gone is the *cantabile* lyricism of the first two

manifestations. The theme is revised in the C-major and E-major episodes of the “Scherzo.” The melodic line leads with greater rhythmic activity while the accompaniment comprises broader chords and increased secondary harmony. The rhythms convey a dance-like jauntiness in keeping with the wider rondo while the harmonies initiate tonal fluctuations that enliven the character. Price demonstrates the self-referential repetition, historically-aware revision, and intertextual/interaesthetic practice that constitute signifyin(g).²⁷⁰ I therefore manifest the C pentatonic theme in different ways and use their distinct character to reinforce their various structural functions in order to (re)embody these practices.

Price continues to reference antebellum African-American dance forms in the episodes as well as the refrains. The G-major episode at the centre of the rondo pays tribute to the patten’ juba. The juba formed the African-American manifestation of the African *Djouba* and the Caribbean *Majumba*.²⁷¹ In *Twelve Years a Slave*, Solomon Northup described the patting actions of the juba from his first-hand experience on the cotton plantations of Louisiana. He began by explaining how the dancing would continue through the night and into the next day:

It does not cease with the sound of the fiddle, but in that case they set up a music peculiar to themselves. This is called “patting,” accompanied with one of those unmeaning songs, composed rather for its adaptation to a certain tune or measure, than for the purpose of expressing any distinct idea. The patting is performed by striking the hands on the knees, then striking the hands together, then striking the right shoulder with one hand, the left with the other—all the while keeping time with the feet and singing ...²⁷²

Few first-hand accounts of the juba exist, but the style survives through derivative forms such as the cakewalk and ragtime; the connections can be heard in the G-major episode (example

²⁷⁰ Gates, 70.

²⁷¹ Eileen Southern and Josephine Wright, *Images: Iconography of Music in African American Culture, 1770s–1920s* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 2000), 26.

²⁷² Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: The Narrative of Solomon Northup, A Citizen of New York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841 and Rescued in 1853* (Auburn, New York: Derby and Miller, 1853), 219.

3.18).

The image shows a musical score for Piano and Pno. (Piano and Piano). The score is in G major and 2/4 time. The tempo is marked 'a tempo' and the dynamics are 'p'. The score consists of two systems. The first system has four measures. The second system starts at measure 229 and also has four measures. The bass line in both systems features a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes on the downbeats, with some measures having eighth notes on the upbeats. The treble line features ascending gestures, often starting with a quarter rest followed by an eighth note on the upbeat, and then a series of eighth notes ascending in the next measure.

Example 3.18: “Scherzo,” bb. 225–232.

The G-major episode aligns with Northup’s description of the juba as a flexible style that does not present a distinct musical idea of its own. Unlike previous themes, this episode lacks melodic distinctiveness; its focus is predominantly rhythmic. Price alludes to the patting rhythms of the juba with ascending gestures in bars 225 and 227 that imitate the upward percussive direction of the sound, from the knees to the hands to the shoulders, as Northup described. The bass line marks the downbeats as if simulating time-keeping foot stomps. Again, imagining (or physicalizing) a body percussion interpretation of this pattern can help to internalize its virtual agency.

“Scherzo” closes with two further iterations of the rondo theme that are briefly separated by the interjecting and previously mentioned E-major episode. Both fully capture the dynamism of black antebellum dance. The first of the two bears the tempo marking *presto* and proceeds with accelerated vigour and vitality; the second of the two continues in this vein but more greatly entwines virtuosic gestures with vernacular tropes. After the second iteration, Price’s musical language becomes increasingly chromatic and whole tone-inspired, referencing the broader modernist compositional trends of the age. Additionally, the textures

thicken and the instrumental range widens. The ending exudes both grandeur and playfulness. Price's adept double-voicedness draws the sonata to a triumphal close.

Closing Thoughts

Price's double-voicedness throughout the sonata reflects mastery of form, language, and technique as it pertains to both a Western European musical canon and a canon of African-American vernacular art forms, which includes a "canon of spirituals."²⁷³ My musical training positions me as an outsider to the latter; temporal, geographical, and cultural factors further reinforce my etic status. However, I have actively sought points of access and connectivity in order to effectively communicate the canonic traditions that were not a part of my formal training. Recognizing the virtual agency of the vernacular has been of paramount importance to my analytical and interpretive processes; studying this agency continues to assist my realizations of Price's aesthetic thought in theoretical and performance contexts.

In their 1925 publication, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, James Weldon and J. Rosamond Johnson discussed how cultural outsiders (namely white concert singers) might approach the Negro Spirituals. Almost a century later, the subject remains a key point for consideration, particularly in the context of interpreting this tradition (among other black vernacular traditions) through a non-traditional vehicle, i.e., the piano. With Price's music continuing to reach broader listenerships and international audiences, some of which are not well-acquainted with its vernacular sources, the Johnsons commentary on the Negro Spirituals has modern-day resonance: "to feel them [i.e., the Negro Spirituals] it is necessary to know the truth about their origin and history, to get in touch with the association of ideas that surround them, and to realize something of what they have meant in the experiences of

²⁷³ Graham, 255.

the people who created them.”²⁷⁴ Whether we approach the sonata as performers, theorists, musicologists, or all of the above and more, studying the virtual agency of an African-American vernacular brings us closer to the Johnsons’ ideal and thus closer to an informed appreciation of Price’s aesthetic thought and the deeper canons from which she drew influence.

²⁷⁴ James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (New York: Viking Press, 1961), 29.

Chapter Four

Composing the Black Chicago Renaissance

Early twentieth-century Chicago was rich with the musical contributions of African-American women. As composers, performers, educators, and more, they enacted their interconnected roles often with the support and sponsorship of women's clubs.²⁷⁵ Their activities unfolded alongside new thinking about women's positions in society and reconceptualizations of womanhood.²⁷⁶ Their success challenged the gendered connotations of the musical spaces they inhabited. Yet, while women's contributions were plentiful and their roles were interconnected, the color-line drew a clear distinction between the communities from which such activities emanated.

Price belonged to a community of black practitioners that embedded racial uplift, gendered progress, and national identity in their craft. When the Price narrative unfolds without reference to the network that comprised her Chicago, we are left with the impression of Price as a black classical anomaly within a typically white arena. However, when we delve into a specific era in this history known as the Black Chicago Renaissance, we can begin to see, first, the extent to which Price's musical activities interacted with the work of other black practitioners and, second, how the musical activities (and interactivities) of these practitioners—and of black women, in particular—converged with the impetus of a dynamic cultural movement. Here, Price is no longer considered a black deviation from a white norm but, instead, one of the many African-descended agents whose aspirations entwined with the collective and whose fruits were supported therein. Tracing the lines of interconnectivity

²⁷⁵ Marian Wilson Kimber discusses the influence of the club movement in the context of white women composers. See Marian Wilson Kimber, "Women Composers at the White House: The National League of American Pen Women and Phyllis Fergus's Advocacy for Women in American Music," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 12, no. 4 (2018): 477.

²⁷⁶Rima Lunin Schultz and Adele Hast, eds., *Women Building Chicago 1790–1990: A Biographical Dictionary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), xlvi.

leaves us with a much stronger sense of how Price's aesthetics simultaneously absorbed, embodied, styled, and reflected a Black Chicago Renaissance school.

Price's compositions, particularly her large-scale works, interacted with Chicago to a far greater extent than they did with Boston or Little Rock. While Price pursued composition during her years at the New England Conservatory and continued to write (though not as prolifically on such a large scale) upon her return to the South, the missing ingredient was her locale. As Walker-Hill explains, "a constellation of events that could have taken place only in Chicago at that time gave impetus to her steadily growing fame."²⁷⁷ There, Price's compositions lived in black, white, female-centred, and male-dominated performance spaces. The consistent support of black classical institutions and advocates could be found behind her programs.

In later life, Price still struggled to garner support in Boston. She sought out Serge Koussevitzky of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and initiated correspondence in the wake of her Chicago Symphony Orchestra debut. Koussevitzky, much like Stock, was known for championing and commissioning works by American composers. However, her letters to Koussevitzky spanned from 1935 to 1944 and amounted to nothing more than the conductor examining her scores. Her letter on July 5, 1943 began:

My Dear Dr. Koussevitzky,

To begin with I have two handicaps—those of sex and race. I am a woman; and I have some Negro blood in my veins.

Knowing the worst, then, would you be good enough to hold in check the possible inclination to regard a woman's composition as long on emotionalism but short on virility and thought content;—until you shall have examined some of my work?

As to the handicap of race, may I relieve you by saying that I neither expect nor ask any concession on that score. I should like to be judged on merit alone—the great trouble having been to get conductors, who know nothing of my work (I am practically unknown in the East, except perhaps as the composer of two songs, one or

²⁷⁷ Walker-Hill, "Black Women Composers in Chicago," 10.

the other of which Marian Anderson includes on most of her programs) to even consent to examine a score.²⁷⁸

While we cannot be sure that Price's scores were ultimately rejected on the basis of her gender and/or race, it still remained that, during her lifetime, Price's orchestral works were not performed in Boston. She revealed in her letter to Koussevitzky that she was "woefully lacking in the hardihood of aggression" and that her letter was a victory against her "hounding timidity."²⁷⁹ The struggle of self-advocacy comes to the fore, but Price was also contending with her position in the classical mainstream as a lesser-known composer, especially beyond the Midwest. Primary sources have not yet revealed whether Price additionally belonged to a circle of Boston-based black advocates who could have uplifted her craft. Nevertheless, it follows that Price's possible lack of access in Boston to the kind of infrastructure she had in Chicago—even back in her New England Conservatory days—would have added limited local advocacy to the handicaps of sex and race. Conversely, Price's music interacted heavily with her Chicago and the Black Renaissance ideals that transformed the city she knew.

The Talented Tenth, New Negro, and intellectual Race woman

The three paradigmatic figures of the Talented Tenth, New Negro, and intellectual Race woman interwove with the classical strand of the Black Chicago Renaissance. Their ideals were reflected in Price's aesthetic but also encased her wider experiences, from her upbringing in Arkansas to her Midwest migration and the South Side community she found therein. To elaborate, Price's compositional outlook drew strong influence from the harsh conditions of antebellum southern life and music of the enslaved that came from it. However, both she and her social stratum were far removed from the severity of slavery. Her immediate

²⁷⁸ Florence Beatrice Price to Serge Koussevitzky, July 5, 1943, xxxv.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

ancestors were freemen and women and established professionals. Indeed, dreams of collective uplift resonated throughout African-American communities, but varying social, economic, and regional circumstances affected how members of these communities were able to access the intellectual resources needed to make these dreams a reality. Price's social, economic, and regional backgrounds positioned her for a life of greater access.

Price's parents were of the Talented Tenth and her Chicago circles comprised the most accomplished musicians and composers of African descent. The artistic vibrancy of her new urban environment blossomed against the backdrop of the Black Chicago Renaissance and resonated with the voice of the New Negro and his vision for progress in contemporary African-American life.²⁸⁰ However, her Chicago community did not only amplify the voice of the New Negro; intellectual Race women dominated in various facets of musical and social activity, and Price was deeply involved in the network of black female intelligentsia.²⁸¹ Consequently, Price's milieu was shaped by the three paradigmatic archetypes of the Talented Tenth, the New Negro, and the intellectual Race woman.

Beginning with the first of this tripartition, members of the Talented Tenth with a proclivity for the arts tended to study European traditions, as if to prove themselves a cultivated class.²⁸² An engagement with classical music through both musical study and appreciation became a way to combat the stereotypes reinforced by prevalent derogatory portrayals of African-American identity. Classical music offered a path away from damaging stereotypes, and in doing so offered a way forward—a means of social mobility. Embracing classical music became an important part of forging a new sense of self within society; but a

²⁸⁰ Alain Locke, "The New Negro" in *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, Alain Locke ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1925), 3–16.

²⁸¹ For a detailed history of Race women from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, see Brittney C. Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017).

²⁸² Schenbeck, 7.

new sense of self also came about through re-establishing a relationship with the past. The Talented Tenth aimed to uplift their African-derived heritage and distance it from grotesque caricature. For many, a sense of racial uplift came in the form of forging a national American sound that both valued and integrated African-American folk music.

In 1918, Robert Nathaniel Dett articulated new possibilities for this folk music, possibilities that would restore the value of this tradition, contribute to the making of a New World national music, and prove the black North American as equal—or, at the very least, human:

We have this wonderful store of folk music—the melodies of an enslaved people, who poured out their longings, their griefs and their aspirations in the one great, universal language. But this store will be of no value unless we utilize it, unless we treat it in such manner that it can be presented in choral form, in lyric and operatic works, in concertos and suites and salon music—unless our musical architects take the rough timber of Negro themes and fashion from it music which will prove that we, too, have national feelings and characteristics, as have European peoples whose forms we have zealously followed for so long.²⁸³

Dett's vision for the future of African-American folk music evinced contemporary thinking around resolution and revolution in the development of a national American music. It demonstrates how composers' use of the musical past was connected to the ways in which they sought to articulate themselves in the politics of the present. These sentiments also resided in the psyche of the New Negro. In the climate of a burgeoning movement that articulated itself along themes of rebirth and revitalization, composers of African descent did not simply write to prove their national feelings and characteristics, they wrote to assert their place within the nation.

If Price's formative years at the turn of the century were shaped by the tenets of the Talented Tenth, her flourishing years, especially through the 1920s and 1930s, belonged to a new philosophy in which those promulgating it were determined to acquire greater platforms,

²⁸³ Quoted in Schenbeck, xii.

opportunities, and freedoms. The theme of racial uplift that guided Talented Tenth ideology through the turn of the century had adapted through these interwar years to meet the urgent needs and wants of African Americans—especially those who had embarked upon the Great Migration and found themselves in new urban environments. One of the most prominent philosophical voices of this cultural renaissance was that of the New Negro.

Alain Locke captured the tone of this new philosophical voice in his essay, “The New Negro.” He distanced the surrounding cultural movement from the ideals of the past in order to introduce a younger generation that, he described, was “vibrant with a new psychology.”²⁸⁴ This new psychology spawned the Harlem Renaissance. Locke’s writings provided some of the movement’s most crucial literary and intellectual offerings. The emergence of the New Negro found an analogy in the transformation of the spiritual with Locke reflecting that the spirituals were “suppressed for generations under the stereotypes of Wesleyan hymn harmony, secretive, half-ashamed, until the courage of being natural brought them out—and behold, there was folk-music.”²⁸⁵ By the same token, he wrote, “the Negro seems suddenly to have slipped from under the tyranny of social intimidation and to be shaking off the psychology of imitation and implied inferiority.”²⁸⁶ It is no coincidence that during this era, Dawson’s *Negro Folk Symphony* (1930), Price’s *Symphony in E minor* (1932) and Still’s *Afro-American Symphony* (1934) entered the frame and that these orchestral works established them as the leading African-American symphonists of their time. And it is certainly no coincidence that rather than write under the psychology of imitation and inferiority, Dawson, Price, and Still took the symphonic genre and, with the unmistakable presence of a black musical idiom, made it in their own African-descended image.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ Locke, 3.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ For further studies on Dawson, Still and the New Negro, see John Andrew Johnson, “William Dawson, ‘The New Negro’ and His Folk Idiom,” *Black Music Research Journal*

It cannot be overlooked, however, that the New Negro was gendered male. Irrespective of whether this gendering was intended as a neutral designation, it remains that the voice of the New Negro emanated from a black patriarchy. A case in point concerns Locke and his critique of Price's *Symphony in E minor*. Therein, he disparagingly described the work as "neither racial nor national, but universal music," while favoring Dawson's *Negro Folk Symphony* and Still's *Afro-American Symphony* as ideal implementations of a black musical idiom.²⁸⁸ Rae Linda Brown persuasively argues that Locke's critique followed a pattern of exclusion. She elucidates, "Locke ... was not always generous in his critique of works by women. His contempt for women in the classroom and the disparagement of their intellect, which carried over into his evaluations of their work, are well documented."²⁸⁹ Therefore, to stop at the New Negro in the cultural framing of Price's aesthetic is to participate in an unhearing or mishearing of Price's compositional voice. Though the New Negro movement invigorated many forms of African American cultural production, there are historiographical implications in centering this movement. Doing so bolsters the "Great Race Man narrative" to the detriment of the Race woman and her intellectual history.²⁹⁰ Brittney C. Cooper observes that "when scholars tell stories that comprise Black intellectual history, they persist in using the Great Race Man framework to guide the narrative."²⁹¹ The erasure of a Race woman narrative misattributes the work, and the words, of countless women to a voice that did not wholly speak for them. The intellectual Race woman of the twentieth century had her own voice and her own nuanced vision for racial uplift and national identity. Price articulated hers through her writings and her music in conversation with a community of

19, no.1 (1999): 43–60 and Carol J. Oja, "'New Music' and the 'New Negro': The Background of William Grant Still's 'Afro-American Symphony,'" *Black Music Research Journal* 22 (2002): 107–130.

²⁸⁸ Brown, "Florence B. Price's 'Negro Symphony,'" 96

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 97

²⁹⁰ Cooper, 24.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

invested Race women. Her message, as captured in the heading of a 1936 *Chicago Defender* article, was one that spoke to the push for women's progress across all fields: "Keep Ideals in Front of You, They Will Lead to Victory, Says Mrs. Florence B. Price."²⁹²

Race women, Cooper writes, "were the first Black women intellectuals." She continues, "as they entered into public leadership roles beyond the church in the decades after Reconstruction, they explicitly fashioned for themselves a public duty to serve their people through diligent and careful intellectual work and attention to 'proving the intellectual character' of the race."²⁹³ Early twentieth-century Race women formulated a vision of racial uplift whereby their leadership was essential to the progress of the race, as was the assertion of a black womanhood that negotiated the double jeopardy of racism and sexism.²⁹⁴

Though each of the paradigmatic figures brought a slightly varied agenda to the table, uplift was a consistent priority across all three. With Price's music so intricately connected to the diverse history of African-American intellectualism—significantly more so than to the experience of slavery itself—her engagement with a black musical past can be read in the context of a broad cultural reawakening that urged generations, both new and old, to look onward and upward.

The Black Chicago Renaissance: an overview

As far as historiographies are concerned, the Black Chicago Renaissance stands in the shadow of the more well-known Harlem Renaissance, which Samuel A. Floyd Jr. demarcates as

²⁹² Goldie M. Walden, "Keep Ideals in Front of You, They Will Lead to Victory, Says Mrs. Florence B. Price," *Chicago Defender*, July 11, 1936, 7.

²⁹³ Cooper, 11

²⁹⁴ Schenbeck, 9. See also Frances Beale, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female" in *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, ed. Toni Cade Bambara (New York: Washington Square Press, 2005), 109–122.

spanning from 1917 to 1935.²⁹⁵ The Harlem Renaissance saw African-descended thinkers and visionaries bring about a rebirth in all aspects of life and identity. Whether it was through music, art, literature, theatre, or dance, the expressive arts were a vehicle for self-actualization and collective uplift. The thinkers and visionaries driving the movement pushed for self-definition beyond the old, the traditional, the rural, and the stereotypical. It was essentially a re-birth of self-definition in order to recognize what it meant to be black in the United States at this time. Floyd and Robert Bone depict the Chicago flowering of the movement as being from 1935 to 1950 due to the proliferation of black cultural activity that took place in this timeframe.²⁹⁶ As a result, the Black Chicago Renaissance is generally understood as a successor to the Harlem Renaissance.

The significant attention given to the overall Negro Renaissance as a literary movement has impacted present-day readings into the Black Chicago Renaissance's chronological position and the musical activity that occurred therein. Of the Harlem Renaissance, Floyd recognizes that this era "has been treated primarily as a literary movement, with occasional asides, contributed as musical spice, about the jazz age and the performances of concert artists."²⁹⁷ He further acknowledges that "black music was in ascendancy much earlier" than what has been documented for its literary counterpart.²⁹⁸ The same may also be said in Chicago where the foundational work that later sustained the city's black classical community through the interwar years began in the same decade that birthed the Harlem Renaissance.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ Floyd, "The Negro Renaissance: Harlem and Chicago Flowerings," in *The Black Chicago Renaissance*, eds. Hine and McCluskey (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 21.

²⁹⁶ Darlene Clark Hine, "Introduction" in *The Black Chicago Renaissance*, xv; 31; Floyd, "The Negro Renaissance: Harlem and Chicago Flowerings," 31; and Robert Bone, "Richard Wright and the Chicago Renaissance," *Callaloo*, 19 (1986): 446–468.

²⁹⁷ Floyd, "Music in the Harlem Renaissance: An Overview," in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd Jr. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 3.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁹⁹ Samantha Ege, "Composing a Symphonist: Florence Price and the Hand of Black Women's Fellowship," *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* (2020),

Jon Michael Spencer argues that music was a driving factor in the success of the Negro Renaissance, even if the movement's periodization is not as conclusive.³⁰⁰ He agrees with Floyd on its influential yet underappreciated role, stating, "despite its obvious importance to the Renaissance, black music was taken for granted because it had always been a pathmaker and a central part of black culture."³⁰¹ Floyd even ponders whether NANM, which was founded in 1919 and had no literary or other artistic parallel at that time, may have provided an organizational model for wider creative movements. He asks, "[w]as it the example of music that gave initial impetus to the Renaissance's artistic philosophy?"³⁰² Although the question remains unanswered, the black classical strand of the Negro Renaissance points to a deeper history.

Although the ideologies that spurred the Harlem and Black Chicago Renaissances were linked, Chicago's black cultural infrastructure shaped the city's distinct contributions to the movement. Its cultural landscape included key institutions such as the *Chicago Defender*, NANM, and a network of homes and churches. These institutions and the interactivity of their members distinguished the movement in terms of its location and placed importance on the black classical strand. In Chicago, I assert that "as early as 1918, change was already afoot, and Price's soon-to-be network of black female champions, sponsors, collaborators, and confidants was already in the making."³⁰³ Within such networks, older generations conducted the foundational tasks of building networks and institutions while younger generations, to quote Darlene Clark Hine, then "built on the strengths of the previous generation of New

forthcoming publication; Tammy L. Kernodle, professor of musicology at Miami University of Ohio, teaches the musical manifestations of the Negro Renaissance within an era that spans from 1915 to 1945.

³⁰⁰ Spencer, xxii.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, xix.

³⁰² Floyd, "Music in the Harlem Renaissance: An Overview," 14.

³⁰³ Ege, "Composing a Symphonist."

Negroes and created a dynamic legacy distinctly Chicagoan.”³⁰⁴ Together, Hine observes, “Black Chicagoans, both old settlers and new migrants, energetically engaged in the challenging work of community building, economic development, political engagement, and the production of a new expressive culture giving voice and form to their New Negro, urban/cosmopolitan identities.”³⁰⁵ Ever present in these intergenerational and intercultural collaborations were early twentieth-century Race women, fashioning pertinent models for leadership and uplift to guide them through the age.

Chicago’s Race women in music

According to Anne Meis Knupfer, almost 300 women were actively involved in shaping the Black Chicago Renaissance.³⁰⁶ Their often-intersecting roles as clubwomen, administrators, educators, carers, volunteers, activists, authors, visual artists, performers, composers, and much more, forged essential communities and modes of support for black practitioners.³⁰⁷ This was the community that awaited Price upon her 1927 arrival and it was the influence of a female-led intelligentsia that led to her national recognition as a symphonist.³⁰⁸

Price’s generation of black female practitioners belonged to a vast, interconnected network; their activity reveals that the foundations of the Black Chicago Renaissance’s classical strand were established as far back as the 1910s. Contemporary figures such as Nora Holt, Estella Bonds, and Maude Roberts George utilized the *Chicago Defender*, NANM, and a network of homes and churches in the South Side for their organizing work. The “woman-centered” Afrocentricity of these arenas provided Price and her peers with the necessary

³⁰⁴ Hine, xv.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., xvi.

³⁰⁶ Knupfer, *The Chicago Black Renaissance and Women’s Activism*, 2.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ege, “Composing a Symphonist.”

institutional support to foster a black classical community.³⁰⁹ Their strategic sisterhood modeled the relational dimension of Black feminist epistemology, which lay at the heart of their organizing work.³¹⁰

Price's symphonic debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra was the result of CMA president George's direct patronage and, therefore, the product of black women's sponsorship as opposed to white patriarchal benevolence. George's contribution was one of the many acts of "black women's collective agency, advocacy, and activism" that the Black Chicago Renaissance witnessed.³¹¹ Numerous women in Chicago participated in the classical music realm and shaped the American cultural landscape. They thrived in creative intellectual spaces beyond the viewing and listening ranges of white audiences. Their activities were culturally significant and socially impactful in ways that continue to challenge the common perception that Price's anomalous proximity to the white mainstream was the only evidence of her importance as a musical figure. Chicago's Race women challenged the restrictive parameters of non-/anti-black performance spaces and redistributed the balance of power and prestige in the musical realm.

Theorizing a Black Chicago Renaissance school

I posit that Price's compositional voice and engagement with black musical idioms expressed a sense of dialogue with the national, internal, and international politics of the Black Chicago Renaissance. I argue that her pursuit of a national music entailed the following: negotiations of race and gender in her soundings of identity and citizenship, a self-perception that encompassed but neither centered nor found itself inhibited by the white gaze, and a Pan-

³⁰⁹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 260.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ege, "Composing a Symphonist."

Africanist purview that drew connections with the international plight of black people. Regarding the national politics of the Black Chicago Renaissance, Hine writes that during this time, “black cultural artists in music and dance and in visual and literary arts demonstrated cognizance of the centrality of race and sex in the distribution of power, the ways in which the social construction of both interacted to determine social privileges and exclusions.”³¹² Price voiced this cognizance in correspondence as she identified the “handicaps” of her race and sex while self-advocating as an accomplished symphonist.³¹³ Her doing so, to quote Brown, “reveals her understanding of what she is up against.”³¹⁴ The challenge, as Hine continues, “was to deconstruct racial categories and rid ‘blackness’ of its negative symbolism and upend beliefs that held whiteness and maleness as the only authentic markers of American identity and citizenship.”³¹⁵ Thus, I put forward that Price’s works from the Black Chicago Renaissance era can be read more pointedly as the negotiation of such challenges.

Apropos of the internal politics, Hine borrows Michael D. Harris’ concept of “double vision” to demonstrate how “the rich cultural productions” of the era “reflected the critical perspective essential to empowerment, hope, and change.”³¹⁶ Breaching “the Du Boisian ‘double consciousness’ that echoed a lingering sense or feeling of not measuring up in the eyes of white America,” Hine (quoting Harris) explains that “Black expressive cultural workers endeavored to produce ‘art that attempts to provide a double vision rather than a double consciousness ... [and] locates itself in the center of an African American epistemology rather than on the periphery where definitions and contentions of race are

³¹² Hine, xvi.

³¹³ Florence Beatrice Price to Serge Koussevitzky, xxxv.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Hine, xvi.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

found.”³¹⁷ This double vision manifested in how Price distinguished being thankful for the progress she had made in composition from being satisfied with her success. When asked by *Chicago Defender* reporter Goldie M. Walden “if her success was not a source of great satisfaction,” Price answered:

I feel so deeply thankful for progress, but satisfaction—no, not satisfaction. I am never quite satisfied with what I write, I don’t think creators ever are quite satisfied with their work. You see there is always an ideal toward which we strive, and ideals, as you know, are elusive. Being of spiritual essence they escape our human hands, but lead us on, and I trust, upward, in a search that ends, I believe, only at the feet of God, the One Creator, and source of all inspiration.³¹⁸

Price’s aesthetic aspirations were not solely grounded in the need for white approval; they stemmed from her own faith-driven epistemology.³¹⁹ William Dawson, then director of the music department of Tuskegee Institute, conveyed similar sentiments a few years prior, saying, in conversation with the *Chicago Defender’s* Nahum Daniel Brascher, “[w]e must never be satisfied with ourselves; we must do more than see with our eyes; we must see with spiritual faith. When we are satisfied with our success we are through. Our great need is for more young men and women to enter the field of music. They must be willing to work for results, and forget self.”³²⁰ In the pursuit of empowerment, hope, and change, both Price and Dawson prioritized progress over complacency, the grounding influence of spiritual faith over the material benefits of white platforms, and the results of the collective over the success of the individual. Double-vision, to reiterate Dawson, was to see with more than just one’s own eyes. Dissociating Price’s aesthetic aspirations from the encasing cultural renaissance and black classical community obscures the bigger picture that guided Black Renaissance men and women’s internal politics.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Walden, 7.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Nahum Daniel Brascher, “Roland Hayes Concert Shows Progress of Race in Music,” *Chicago Defender*, June 24, 1933, 11.

While Price's relationship to Pan-Africanism is not well-documented, *Ethiopia's Shadow in America* reflects the impact of international events upon black consciousness and identity, such as the attempted colonization of Ethiopia.³²¹ Floyd argues that the Black Renaissances in Harlem and Chicago "were spawned by Pan-Africanism, which posits the belief that black people all over the world share an origin and a heritage, that the welfare of black people everywhere is inexorably linked, and that the cultural products of blacks everywhere should express their particular fundamental beliefs."³²² While there is much more to query on the subject of Price's Pan-African stance, *Ethiopia's Shadow in America* is an important starting point.

Ivy G. Wilson observes that while "Ethiopia" was used throughout the nineteenth century as a generic descriptor for people of African descent, "after the Battle of Adowa in 1896, 'Ethiopia' and 'Ethiop' gained greater specificity and significance in the African American imagination."³²³ Burleigh's "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors" (1915) evidenced the movement of African-American composers toward a wider "black diasporic consciousness" that gained traction in the 1930s with Ethiopia's resistance to Italian fascism.³²⁴ Though *Ethiopia's Shadow in America*, much like "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors," depicts the slave histories of the United States, the evocation of Ethiopia in the midst of transnational oppressions upon people of African descent intersected with the historical, and the rather more recent trajectories of African Americans. The degree to which Price espoused Pan-Africanism is the subject of an investigation that goes far beyond the scope of this dissertation. Still, it is an area to further engage in a future study that comprehensively examines Price's relationship to the Black Chicago Renaissance.

³²¹ Hine, xvii.

³²² Floyd, "The Negro Renaissance," 21.

³²³ Ivy G. Wilson, *Specters of Democracy: Blackness and the Aesthetics of Politics in the Antebellum U.S.*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 99.

³²⁴ Ibid.

Sounding identity and citizenship

The national, internal, and international politics of the Black Chicago Renaissance manifested in how composers sounded identity and citizenship. But public and personal navigations of a New World nationalism had been going on since the previous century. Price's ideas around identity and citizenship in music were certainly amplified in Chicago. However, the question of what an American school of composition would look and sound like was one that composers of all backgrounds had still been striving to answer even at the turn of the century.

A few months after Price's graduation from the New England Conservatory, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875–1912) featured at Jordan Hall on December 12–13, 1906. The program comprised his own compositions and the performers Burleigh, Willy Hess (violin), and Georges Grisez (clarinet), as well as the Boston Symphony Quartet.³²⁵ This marked the first invitation of a composer of African descent to the venue, and while the event lies after Price's conservatory years, it alludes to the cultural transformations that were beginning to shape the American musical landscape at the turn of the century. Like Coleridge-Taylor and Burleigh's feature appearance at the conservatory, many more composers and performers of African descent were sounding identity and citizenship in concert with the ongoing movement for black civil rights. From James Weldon and J. Rosamond Johnsons' "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" (1899) to the Niagara Movement (founded in 1905), the first few years of the new century exemplified the political shifts that would eventually lead to the Black Renaissance.

While studying at the New England Conservatory, Price had already begun to explore black musical idioms as the source material for large-scale composition. Under Chadwick and Converse, she composed her first string trio and symphony, both of which drew upon

³²⁵ "Jordan Hall Program Inventory," *New England Conservatory*, last modified October 17, 2017, <http://ir.flo.org/nec/institutionalPublicationPublicView.action?institutionalItemId=20>.

African-American folk themes.³²⁶ In an environment shaped by the Second New England School or the “Boston Six,” to which Chadwick belonged (alongside Amy Beach, Arthur Foote, Edward MacDowell, John Knowles Paine, and Horatio Parker), Price cultivated an American music that resisted the school’s full influence. The Second New England School, though mostly trained by European pedagogues, sought to establish an indigenous American sound (but their perspectives on indigeneity did not wholly align with Price’s).³²⁷ Rejecting the cosmopolitan stance of employing models that owed heavily to European traditions, the Boston Six leaned toward a more provincial outlook for the future of American music. While Irish and Scottish folk songs wove their way into the provincial vision, many agreed that the black musical idiom had no part in it.

The controversies of an American school of music were brought to the fore with Dvořák’s U.S. arrival in 1893. In an article called “The Real Value of Negro Melodies,” Dvořák was quoted as saying, “I am now satisfied that the future of this country must be founded upon what are called the negro melodies. . . . These beautiful and varied themes are the product of American soil. They are American.”³²⁸ Dvořák believed that the most authentic expression of a distinctly American art music could only come from building upon the musical material of the common people, akin to the manner in which the canonic greats of the past had sought their inspiration. He acknowledged that not all agreed with his outlook but felt, nonetheless, that they were wrong to dismiss the potential he saw in the plantation songs.

Dvořák’s assertions clashed with some proponents of the Second New England School. MacDowell said, “We have here in America been offered a pattern for an ‘American’

³²⁶ “Composer Wins Noteworthy Prizes for Piano Sonata,” 25.

³²⁷ *Music in American Life: An Encyclopedia of the Songs, Styles, Stars and Stories That Shaped Our Culture*, ed. Jacqueline Edmondson, (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2013), 187.

³²⁸ “The Real Value of Negro Melodies,” *New York Herald*, May 21, 1893, 28.

national musical costume by the Bohemian Dvořák ... though what the Negro melodies have to do with Americanism in art still remains a mystery.”³²⁹ Paine spoke of an American school that transcended the concept of nationality entirely:

The time is past when composers are to be classed according to geographical limits. It is not a question of nationality, but individuality, and individuality of style is not the result of imitation—whether of folk songs, negro melodies, the tunes of the heathen Chinese or Digger Indians, but of personal character and inborn originality. During the present century musical art has overstepped all national limits It is incomprehensible to me how any thoroughly cultivated musician or musical critic can have such limited and erroneous views of the true functions of American composers.³³⁰

Chadwick also expressed concern about the role of African-American folk melodies, saying, “I am not sufficiently familiar with the real negro melodies to be able to offer any opinion of the subject. Such negro melodies I have heard, however, I should be sorry to see become the basis of an American school of composition.”³³¹ Beach, though not completely at odds with Dvořák, was reluctant to accept these new possibilities for an American art music, stating, “without the slightest desire to question the beauty of the negro melodies of which [Dvořák] speaks so highly, or to disparage them on account of their source, I cannot help feeling justified in the belief that they are not fully typical of our country. The African population of the United States is far too small for its songs to be considered ‘American.’”³³²

Price’s aesthetic complicated the identities of the cosmopolitan and the provincial, the foreign and the familiar, the Self and the Other. She blurred notions of a New World nationalism as viewed through the lens of a staunchly Anglo-American epistemology. Her individuality as a composer was not detached from her nationality; her original ideas did not

³²⁹ Quoted in Richard Crawford, “Edward MacDowell: Musical Nationalism and an American Tone Poet,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 49, no. 3 (1996): 556.

³³⁰ Quoted in Joseph Horowitz, *Wagner Nights: An American History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 166 and Joseph Horowitz, “Dvořák and Boston,” *American Music* 19, no. 1(2001): 11.

³³¹ Quoted in Horowitz, “Dvořák and Boston,” 11.

³³² *Ibid.*

arise in isolation of her musical and cultural ancestries. The black folkloric traditions that comprised her heritage were, in Price's view, very much representative of the country and its melting-pot formation. Though her formal training was directed by proponents of the Second New England School, her compositional outlook reverberated Dvořák's vision. Yet her outlook can also be attributed to earlier generations of diasporic African composers who integrated vernacular styles housed in the cultural memories and collective narratives of New World survival.

As with Coleridge-Taylor, Burleigh also uplifted black musical idioms in his works. However, Burleigh, who was part of the first generation of post-slavery composers, bore a more direct connection to the traditions.³³³ Burleigh drew upon a sound world that had been passed down by his grandfather, who would sing plantation songs to him. Even though Burleigh studied with Dvořák at the National Conservatory of Music in New York and sang spirituals for the Bohemian composer, who encouraged his blend of musical languages, the style that Burleigh developed was less a product of Dvořák's influence and more a source of Dvořák's affirmation.

Burleigh was best known for his contributions to art song and especially his arrangements of Negro Spirituals for solo voice. His influence was far-reaching; his approach was embraced by subsequent generations of African-American composers, including Price.³³⁴ Price was further removed from Burleigh's relationship to black folkloric pasts; her privileged position further augmented her distance from it. Yet, there was a contemporary pertinence to Price's decision to root her aesthetic in Burleigh's influence and the longer

³³³ Portions of this subsection duplicate Ege, "Florence Price and the Politics of her Existence."

³³⁴ Burleigh also inspired a tradition of African-American concert singers to include arrangements of Negro Spirituals in their repertoire, from former student Abbie Mitchell to Roland Hayes, from Marian Anderson to Jessye Norman as stated in Ege, "Florence Price and the Politics of her Existence," 5.

tradition of African-American compositional aesthetics, particularly in light of the cultural landscape that was forming around her as the century moved forward.³³⁵

A Century of Progress

Price's black folk-inspired symphony and its première unfolded alongside the national conversation on racial progress and Black Renaissance ideals. But in the lead-up to the Century of Progress exposition that housed the première, many African Americans wondered to what extent (if at all) their communities would take part in the city's celebrations. *Chicago Defender* critic Dewey R. Jones documented their concerns:

For months rumors have flown far and [wide] about this mammoth project. "The Race will not take part," said some of them. "The Race will be barred from everything within the gates of the exposition grounds," said others. "The Race will not be represented in the official set-up at the fair," said still others. To all these rumors there seemed to be no answers. The officials, busy with their preparations for the most spectacular show ever staged, naturally wanted no dissenting voices along the lines, so they discreetly ignored all direct questions bearing on this subject.³³⁶

The Race was represented but not without controversy and reports of discrimination.

Nonetheless, this was the platform that elevated Price to the status of the first nationally recognized black female symphonist. The world première of the Symphony in E minor took place as part of the Music Programs portion of the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. The programs were sponsored by the Chicago Friends of Music and the symphony belonged to The Negro in Music event.

³³⁵ This passage reproduces parts of Ege, "Florence Price and the Politics of her Existence."

³³⁶ Dewey R. Jones, "Race Represented as World's Fair Opens in Blaze of Glory," *Chicago Defender*, June 3, 1933, 1.

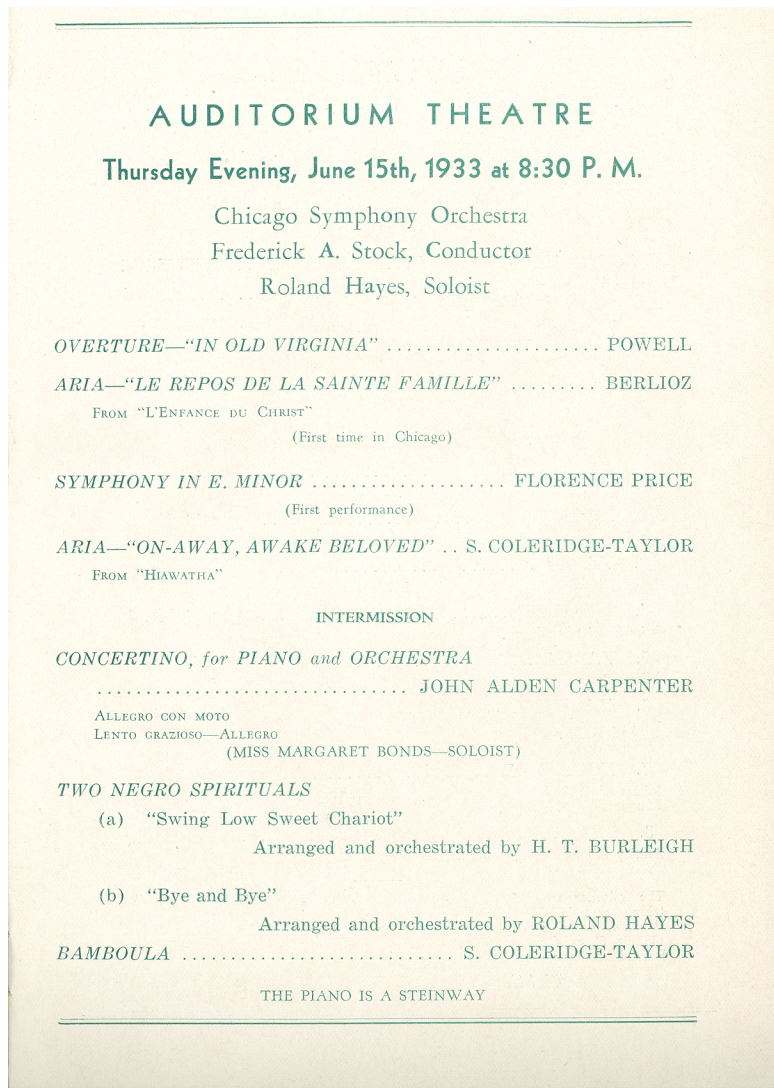


Figure 4.1: “The Negro in Music.” Century of Progress program (1933). Rosenthal Archives, Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

John Powell’s presence on the program, though not intended to stir controversy, was a reminder of where (and to whom) the definition of American-ness in classical music generally extended. Stock thoroughly championed American music throughout his tenure with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.³³⁷ Dena J. Epstein notes that his life-long service to American composers was evidenced in how he “encouraged them, performed their music often and repeatedly, held public rehearsals to permit additional performances, and praised

³³⁷ Dena J. Epstein, “Frederick Stock and American Music,” *American Music* 10, no. 1 (1992): 22.

them in countless interviews.”³³⁸ Price recalled an exchange with Stock in which she also received his encouragement and praise:

[I] met Dr. Frederick Stock on Michigan Avenue. He stopped, shook hands and chatted. [He] asked what I was working on. [I] told him I was working on a piano concerto. “Good” said he. “Why not have the young woman (Margaret Bonds) who played so well (referring to Carpenter’s Concertino on [the] same night my Symphony was played) learn it so it can be played.”³³⁹

Rae Linda Brown notes that the Chicago Symphony Orchestra had both Price’s symphony and Concerto in One Movement in their repertoire.³⁴⁰ However, Powell’s music received stronger advocacy and surfaced more consistently in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s programming. Under Stock, Powell’s Concerto for Violin in E major received its first Chicago performance in 1913 as part of an all American music program.³⁴¹ Powell featured as the soloist for the 1921 Chicago Symphony’s première of *Rhapsody Nègre for Piano and Orchestra*.³⁴² But as Powell’s white supremacist views hardened, *Rhapsody Nègre* became his last foray into African-American vernacular influences; he later stated that the “pessimistic mood of my Negro Rhapsody is no more than recognition of the gloomy outlook for the Negro’s racial development in a white country.”³⁴³

Stock continued to give Chicago premières of Powell’s works in 1927 (Overture “In Old Virginia”) and in 1932 (*Natchez-on-the-Hill*, op. 30). Powell’s orchestral works were

³³⁸ Dena J. Epstein, “Frederick Stock and American Music,” *American Music* 10, no. 1 (1992): 22.

³³⁹ Diary, Aug 26, 27, 1948, Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers (MC 988 Series I, Box 1, Folder 2), Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

³⁴⁰ Brown, “William Grant Still, Florence Price, and William Dawson,” 85.

³⁴¹ Epstein, 43.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ “John Powell, Noted Pianist-Composer, Gives Views on Negro Music, Its Use and Abuse,” *Musical Courier* (1930): 8, Papers of John Powell, 1888–1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia quoted in Karen Adam, “‘The Nonmusical Message Will Endure With It.’ The Changing Reputation and Legacy of John Powell (1882–1964),” (Master’s thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006), 35.

part of the American music fabric and he, too, had a vision for its identity. Powell remarked in an undated interview, “Do I think that negro music will serve as the basis for an American school of composition? No. I do not think so, for the same reason that I think Indian music cannot be so used. Why? Because neither is American. The whole civilization of the United States is European.”³⁴⁴

Price opposed this view throughout her career. She touched upon the matter in the penultimate paragraph of a class essay that was completed in 1938 during her studies at the Chicago Normal Music College. The primary subjects in this excerpt (i.e., composers) were neither black nor white, neither male nor female; they were simply American. The passage read:

Within the last dozen years America has become “music-conscious.” No longer is it necessary for an American musician to assume a foreign name as a passport of approval. It is now the other way around. No longer must one hie to foreign shores for study in order to achieve prestige. No longer are we ashamed of our own musical composers. More and more conductors are including upon their programs the works of contemporary Americans.³⁴⁵

However, between the beliefs of the Second New England School that left little room for the black musical idiom to flourish and the disparaging statements of Powell that dissociated the black musical idiom from its American roots all together, the public conversation in the classical mainstream lacked the significant input of black voices and, as a result, perpetuated African Americans’ peripheral (at best) or non-existent (at worst) relationship to the development of an American school of composition. Powell’s white supremacist politics were not directly voiced by the institutions that championed his music, but the narrow definition of identity and citizenship alongside the white maleness embedded in perceptions of “individuality” and “originality” emboldened his platform.

³⁴⁴ “With Artist and Musician,” n.d. Papers of John Powell, 1888–1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 36, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia quoted in Adam, 41.

³⁴⁵ Class Essays, 1938.

These factors are what made Price's symphonic debut such a victory for black Chicagoans. Symphony in E minor brought vicarious pride to the South Side community: George described it in the *Chicago Defender* as a work that represented black Chicago's musicians.³⁴⁶ In fact, George had fully anticipated the broader cultural significance of this program. As president of the CMA, which was a member of the Chicago Friends of Music, George entered a contract with Stock and underwrote The Negro in Music program at a cost of \$250 to ensure its materialization.³⁴⁷

Reviews in the white mainstream media met Price's symphonic debut positively for the most part. Vicarious pride was certainly lacking, but Price was largely commended for her contribution to orchestral repertoire. Edward C. Moore of the *Chicago Tribune* called the Symphony in E minor a display of "high talent" and the performance "a well deserved success."³⁴⁸ Under the heading, "Florence Price's Symphony in E Wins Warm Applause From Sophisticated Audience," Chicago socialite Mrs. William Mitchell Blair said that the symphony "had great success and the young composer was here herself and very warmly welcomed."³⁴⁹ Glenn Dillard Gunn of the *Chicago Herald Examiner* noted the public reception, reporting that the symphony "proved to be highly interesting to her audience" and "seemed frankly to avow its ideal in the Dvorak 'New World Symphony,'" after which he left remarks on how Price might have developed the work further.³⁵⁰ Claudia Cassidy—nicknamed "Acidy Cassidy"—of the *Chicago Journal of Commerce* left a less favorable review with racist overtones; she depicted the symphony as "an adequate well-made piece of

³⁴⁶ George, "News of the Music World," *Chicago Defender*, June 3, 1933, 15.

³⁴⁷ Ege, "Composing a Symphonist."

³⁴⁸ Moore, "City Assured Symphony Season of 28 Weeks for Next Winter," 21.

³⁴⁹ Mrs. William Mitchell Blaire, "Florence Price's Symphony in E Wins Warm Applause From Sophisticated Audience," June 16, 1933.

³⁵⁰ Glenn Dillard Gunn, "Roland Hayes Is Soloist at Auditorium," *Chicago Herald & Examiner*, June 16, 1933.

music, willing to follow accepted paths, and given to little communicative inspiration.”³⁵¹

Herman Devries of the *Chicago American* wrote that the audience could readily understand Price’s Wanamaker success; he described the symphony as “ably, intelligently, interestingly constructed and conceived” and concluded “she is not an imitator, but let us say a follower of the best traditions of our day, if our day can be said to possess traditions.”³⁵² Eugene Stinson of the *Chicago Daily News* praised the symphony as “a faultless work . . . reminiscent at times of other composers who have dealt with America in tone” and “worthy of a place in the regular symphonic repertory.”³⁵³

For black Chicagoans, the significance of The Negro in Music program and Price’s contribution therein went beyond the concert hall. *Chicago Defender* founder Richard S. Abbott reported that, “[n]o one could have sat through that program sponsored by the Chicago Friends of Music at the Auditorium theater last week and not have felt, with a sense of deep satisfaction, that the Race is making progress in music. First there was a feeling of awe as the Chicago Symphony orchestra, an aggregation of master musicians of the white race, and directed by Dr. Frederick Stock, internationally known conductor, swung into the beautiful, harmonious strains of a composition by a Race woman. And when the number was completed, the large auditorium, filled to the brim with music lovers of all races, rang out in applause both for the composer and the orchestral rendition, it seemed that the evening could hold no greater thrills.”³⁵⁴ Abbott then went on to state that greater thrills did, indeed, come in the form of Hayes, Bonds, and Coleridge-Taylor, and concluded, “[y]ou could not have heard this concert without realizing that your people not only are coming ahead in music, but

³⁵¹ Claudia Cassidy, “Roland Hayes Sings for Friends of Music in Auditorium Concert,” *Chicago Journal of Commerce*, June 16, 1933.

³⁵² Devries, “ROLAND HAYES WINS PRAISE AT CONCERT,” *Chicago American*, June 16, 1933.

³⁵³ Eugene Stinson, *Chicago Daily News*, June 16, 1933.

³⁵⁴ Richard Abbot, *Chicago Defender*, June 24, 1933, 11.

that, in the higher arts, our white brother is growing less fractious. As we listened to that concert we took hope again that there may yet be real brotherhood in this land of ours.”³⁵⁵

Brascher also felt optimistic about the future of African Americans in music. He described *The Negro in Music* program as, “the very last word in music achievement.” He further explained: “For us the last word is the first opportunity. It was the first opportunity for such a setting; it was successful absolutely on merit, and it is the beginning of a new era for us in the world of music.”³⁵⁶ Indeed, Price’s symphonic debut at *A Century of Progress* was no doubt a career highlight. After this, other Chicago-based conventions staged by the *World’s Fair Century of Progress Expositions* programmed her works, as did the *International Congress of Women*.³⁵⁷ These engagements broadened Price’s national exposure, all the while cementing the centrality of her Chicago.

Interactions between music and city

Price’s music continued to enliven Chicago’s classical music scene through the 1930s. Her music was performed in a variety of contexts that encompassed *World’s Fair* showcases of Illinois-based practitioners and women composers from the United States and beyond, multimedia collaborations with an up-and-coming dance troupe, and NANM-sponsored events around the city. In addition to this, the Works Progress Administration (WPA)—enacted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal policy to combat the Great Depression—generated outlets for Price’s work. The WPA, Hine writes, “significantly assisted creative literary and performance artists.”³⁵⁸ Price was one of many Black Renaissance women in Chicago to be supported. I reconstruct the interactions between

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ Brascher, 11.

³⁵⁷ Walker-Hill, “Black Women Composers in Chicago,” 10.

³⁵⁸ Hines, xxiii.

Price's music and her city using extant programs and newspaper reports; what follows merely scratches the surface of this interactivity.

In December 1932, Price and Margaret Bonds accompanied a dance performance and ballet première of *Fantasia Negre No. 1* at the Stevens Hotel Beaux Arts Ball.³⁵⁹ Russian ballet teacher Ludmilla Speranzeva provided the choreography. A small troupe called the Modern Dancers, which featured African-American anthropologist and dancer Katherine Dunham, realized the performance.³⁶⁰ It was documented at the time that, “[g]reat interest was centered upon the number because “*Fantasia Negre*” was the 1932 Wanamaker prize winning composition of Florence B. Price and upon hearing Miss Margaret Bonds play the number, Mme. Speranzeva arranged the ballet.”³⁶¹ However, there are a few errors in this reporting: *Fantasia Negre No. 1* was not a winning composition in the 1932 Wanamaker contest. The reporter may have mistaken this work for *Fantasia Negre No. 4*; however, the fourth *Fantasia* was neither a winning work, nor was it performed in Chicago until 1937.³⁶² Considering that the fantasy in question also had an orchestral version (which we may presume is the Concert Overture—Based on the Spiritual: “Sinner Please Don’t Let This Harvest Pass”), this further affirms the likelihood of *Fantasia Negre No. 1*.

The *Chicago Defender* reported:

The number is based upon the spiritual and the excellent voice of Gladys Hayden Sims filled the Grand ballroom during the dancing, making a thrilling climax. Miss Bonds and Mrs. Price played the number and the two pianos were ample as the number is written for orchestral use.

The dancers are Katherine Dunham, premier dansuese [*sic*]; Dorothy Jackson, Ruth Cromer, Frances Dunham, Jessie Anderson and Beatrice Betts. The costumes were directoire princess effect to the ankles with black braided wigs and bare feet. They

³⁵⁹ Robert W. Bone and Richard A. Courage, *The Muse in Bronzeville: African American Creative Expression in Chicago, 1932–1950* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 81.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ “Modern Dances Praised at Stevens,” *Chicago Defender*, December 24, 1932, 12.

³⁶² Ellistine Perkins Holly, “Black Concert Music in Chicago, 1890 to the 1930s,” *Black Music Research Journal* 10 no. 1 (1990): 147.

were most attractive and their grace and ability as dancers are well known The modern dancers are being sought for other exclusive affairs in the near future.³⁶³

Dunham and her colleagues continued to incorporate Price's compositions in their programs for the current season.

In 1933, a month after the Symphony in E minor's première, Price presented her music at another Century of Progress exposition. Working in collaboration with soprano Cleo Wade, George documented that "the composers-pianist gave a 30-minute program in the exhibit room of the National Council of Women at the Hall of Social Science Thursday afternoon [July 6]."³⁶⁴ Soon after this, Price took a short vacation outside of the city to recuperate from what had been an exhausting few months. George recorded that "many requests have been made to meet [Price], but the strenuous work of the spring in preparing her symphony for presentation by the Chicago Symphony orchestra on June 15, made it necessary for her to take a vacation."³⁶⁵

However, Price continued to participate in some engagements during what was intended as a period of rest. One such engagement was her contribution to the cultural programs staged by the Illinois Host House at A Century of Progress. The Illinois Host House was described as "one of the most popular rendezvous within the World's Fair grounds."³⁶⁶ Mrs. Edith A. Steinbrecher (official co-host, by appointment of Governor Henry Horner, and wife of prominent real-estate official Paul Steinbrecher) described the Illinois Host House programs as "a unified structural series of presentations marked by the distinction of the participants and the earnestness and sincerity of their purpose. The seven fields covered include music, art, education, drama, literature, science, and social welfare."³⁶⁷

³⁶³ "Modern Dances Praised at Stevens," 12.

³⁶⁴ George, "News of the Music World," *Chicago Defender*, July 8, 1933, 15.

³⁶⁵ George, "News of the Music World," *Chicago Defender*, September 9, 1933, 15.

³⁶⁶ Ruth de Young, "Illinois Host House Popular Place at Fair: 3 Women Credited with Its Success," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 27, 1933, G3.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

The music offerings were scheduled as a weekly series for the duration of the fair. They took place every Sunday afternoon and showcased Illinois' most esteemed composers. Price, Louis Victor Saar, Leo Sowerby, Adolf Brune, John Alden Carpenter, Daniel Protheroe, William Lester, Louise Ayres Garnett, Donald Drew, Carrie Jacobs Bond, and Theodora Sturkow-Ryder were among some of the invited composers.

Though the exact details of Price's program have yet to be identified, George documented that Price delivered a program of original works for piano, violin, and voice, including part song on July 23, 1933.³⁶⁸ According to George, Price rendered two of her own compositions. NANM members, including violinist Walter Dyett and the Chicago Treble Clef Glee Club, joined her in interpreting what George described as "other interesting compositions, some of which are in manuscript form."³⁶⁹

Occurring a month later in August 1933 was another performance of *Fantasia Negre No. 1* at the Stevens Hotel. There, Bonds performed the fantasy for the International Congress of Women.³⁷⁰ Price, alongside soprano Anita Patti Brown and pianist Hazel Harrison, was honored by Sally Stewart, president of the National Association of Colored Women and vice president of the International Congress. Bonds, Neota L. McCurdy Dyett, and Gertrude Smith Jackson were among the featured performers; Price's fantasy was programmed alongside compositions by Dett ("Somebody's Knocking at Your Door," 1919) and Dawson ("Out in the Fields," 1930).

The following year, the Chicago World's Fair featured Price's music featured again. On October 12, 1934, the Woman's Symphony Orchestra of Chicago, with conductor Ebba Sundstrom, performed the Piano Concerto in One Movement at the Century of Progress Exposition held at the Ford Symphony Gardens. The program exclusively showcased

³⁶⁸ George, "News of the Music World," *Chicago Defender*, September 8, 1933, 15.

³⁶⁹ George, "News of the Music World," *Chicago Defender*, July 29, 1933, 15.

³⁷⁰ George, "News of the Music World," *Chicago Defender*, August 12, 1933, 15.

contemporary women composers. Price's concerto featured alongside works by Amy Beach, Carrie Jacobs-Bond, Grace Burlin, Eleanor Everest Freer, Helen Sears, Mabel Daniels, Phyllis Fergus, Florence Galajikian, Sadie Britain, Alice Brown Stout, and Cecile Chaminade. Margaret Bonds was the soloist for the Price performance.

NANM continued to champion Price's music in their programs. In one particular "Honor Night Program" (ca. 1934), Nannie S. Reed, Grace W. Tompkins, and Wilhelmena Alexander rendered Price's Piano Concerto in One Movement as a three-piano ensemble.³⁷¹ The R. Nathaniel Dett Club presented Price as one of its "Composer-Artist-Members" in "A Second Afternoon of Original Music."³⁷² The program took place at the Lincoln Centre on June 30, 1935. Alexander C. Parks sang Price's "My Dream" (1935), accompanied by Hermione Goines at the piano. The concert closed with *The Wind and The Sea* (1934) for mixed ensemble; the Dett Ensemble performed this work with Neota McCurdy Dyett (R. Nathaniel Dett Club president) on the piano and Orrin Suthern on the organ.

Price's *Fantasie Negre No. 4* premiered alongside an earlier work by Clarence Cameron White in a WPA-sponsored Composers Forum on June 15, 1937. The concert took place at the Federal Music Project Building in Chicago. The program opened with White's Suite for String Quartet (1919). Price's *The Wind and the Sea* (octet) and Piano Quintet in E minor (1936) made up the remainder of the program, with the composer at the piano for the octet and Marion Hall at the piano for the fantasy and quintet.³⁷³ Two years later in June

³⁷¹ The program states "Maude Roberts George, presiding," therefore I have used George's presidential term (1933–1935) to gauge the year of the program. I have factored in that the Piano Concerto in One Movement was completed by 1934 and that George's presidency likely ended in July 1935, which rules that year out. Programs, ca. 1903–1953, Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a, Box 1, Folder 2), Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

³⁷² June 30, 1935, Musicale, Lincoln Center, Chicago, Ill, Programs, Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers (MC 988, Series I, Box 1, Folder 5, Item 2), Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

³⁷³ Ellistine Perkins Holly, "Black Concert Music in Chicago, 1890 to the 1930s," *Black Music Research Journal* 10 no. 1 (1990): 147.

1939, the Chicago Woman's Symphony performed Price's Symphony No. 2 in G minor (ca. 1935).³⁷⁴ Again in 1939, the Chicago Park District and Chicago Federation of Musicians presented Price's *Three Negro Dances* (1933) at the Jackson Park Concert. The event took place on August 13; conductor Glenn Cliffe Bainum led the Glenn Bainum Band through a program that paid tribute to Fort Dearborn.³⁷⁵

The 1940s saw Price's art songs interact with a wider national audience. Rob Roy Peery, the publication manager for Theodore Presser Co., expressed a keen interest in her art song "Songs to the Dark Virgin" (1930). He wrote to Price on July 30, 1940, "we understand that you have written a song, under the title SONGS OF THE DARK VIRGIN, which has been sung by Marian Anderson. If you have not already arranged for the publication of this work, we should be happy to have you send it for our consideration."³⁷⁶ Anderson (1897–1993) had featured Price's "Song to the Dark Virgin" in her recent programs. With Anderson fast becoming one of the most celebrated performers of her time, her programming of Price's works attracted nation-wide attention. Anderson performed Price's arrangement of the spiritual, "My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord" (1937) on the steps of the Lincoln memorial in 1939, which affirmed Anderson's celebrity and brought Price's music to millions of listeners; but this performance was shrouded in controversy. Anderson had been scheduled to perform the Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. However, her anticipated performance was met with resistance from the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Anderson recalled the controversy in her autobiography:

As it turned out, the decision to arrange an appearance in Constitution Hall proved to be momentous. I left bookings entirely to the management. When this one was being

³⁷⁴ Lena Caillout, "Music Notes: Florence B. Price," *Chicago Defender*, June 10, 1939, 12.

³⁷⁵ Programs, ca. 1903–1953, Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a, Box 1, Folder 2), Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

³⁷⁶ July 30, 1940. Rob Roy Peery (Philadelphia, Pa.) to F.P., Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers (MC 988 Series I, Box 1, Folder 1), Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

made I did not give it much thought. Negotiations for the renting of the hall were begun while I was touring, and I recall that the first initiation I had that there were difficulties came by accident. Even then I did not find out exactly what was going on; all I knew was that something was amiss. It was only a few weeks before the scheduled date for Washington that I discovered the full truth—that the Daughters of the American Revolution, owners of the hall, had decreed that it could not be used by one of my race.³⁷⁷

Anderson's performance venue moved to the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and took place before an audience approximately 75,000 strong and a radio listenership in the millions, Anderson made history and, as a corollary, bolstered Price's renown.³⁷⁸

Back in Chicago, however, Price's community had started to lose some of its most important figures. In April 1938, Neota McCurdy Dyett suddenly passed away at the age of thirty-nine. The *Chicago Defender* reported that "there was never any Chicago program when this unusual young woman failed to respond to an invitation for co-operation, personally, as an accompanist, or arranging for members of the Dett club to assist with numbers."³⁷⁹ A year later, Margaret Bonds left for New York to advance her career and pursue further musical study; her mother Estella soon joined her.³⁸⁰ George's role at the *Chicago Defender* came to an abrupt end in 1940 when, on October 21, she was shot in the mouth at her home by her son; he had mistaken her for an intruder.³⁸¹ George remained in critical condition for several months and eventually passed away in 1943. While Price's music continued to be performed in Chicago, what made the 1930s such a significant era was not simply that her music crossed the color line into the Chicago Symphony's Auditorium Theater, but that before her success in the white mainstream, women such as Estella and Margaret Bonds, McCurdy Dyett, and

³⁷⁷ Marian Anderson, *My Lord, what a Morning: An Autobiography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 184–5.

³⁷⁸ See Jones, "Lift Every Voice."

³⁷⁹ "Hold Impressive Rites for Neota McCurdy Dyett," *Chicago Defender*, April 2, 1938, 6.

³⁸⁰ Alethea N. Kilgore, "The Life and Solo Vocal Works of Margaret Allison Bonds (1913–1972)" (D.M.A. diss., Florida State University, 2013) 18–26.

³⁸¹ "Judge George's Widow Shot By Son," *Chicago Defender*, October 26, 1940, 1.

George (and many more) had been instrumental in championing Price's music throughout the city. Their uplift in the era of the Black Chicago Renaissance lies at the heart of her legacy.

Epilogue: Legacy

Should I or others be the judge?
I can only give bare facts.

Florence Price on the subject of her outstanding contributions
Correspondence, 1929–1953

On January 24, 1950, about three years before her passing, Price gave an evening lecture at the George Cleveland Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library. The lecture was called “Early Chicago As Revealed Thru’ Her Father’s Diary.”³⁸² The DuSable History Club of Chicago sponsored the program. At least six decades intervened between Dr. Smith’s and Price’s adulthood experiences of Chicago, from the time of his relocation there just before the Great Fire to the time of her move just prior to the Great Depression. But Price must have recognized the continuity from her father’s trajectory to her own. Reconstruction-era Chicago was as concerned with the duties of cultural and community formation as her Chicago had been in the age of the Great Migration.³⁸³ Dr. Smith’s Chicago was, in effect, the Black Chicago Renaissance in the making. Although the content of Price’s lecture is, as yet, unknown, the event is wrapped in historical layers that intersect with the question of Price’s legacy today.

History teacher Samuel Stratton founded the DuSable History Club, which was named after Chicago’s first permanent settler, the Haitian-born Jean Baptiste Point du Sable. Stratton, as an active community member, challenged black Chicagoans to play a greater role in their own historiography.³⁸⁴ He asked his community, “Are we ready to study Negro History? Why separate and concentrate upon it as such, when the acts of Negro heroes are

³⁸² A discussion with Ashley Dennis on August 8, 2019, brought this event to my attention. DuSable History Club, Florence Price Talk 1/24/1950, Box 13 Hall 211, George Cleveland Hall Branch Archives, Chicago Public Library, Carter G. Woodson Regional Library, Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature.

³⁸³ Christopher R. Reed, “African American Life in Antebellum Chicago, 1833-1860,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historic Society* 94, no. 4 (2001/2002): 364–365.

³⁸⁴ Knupfer, 81.

built into the history of our own nation?"³⁸⁵ George Cleveland Hall Library (named after another of the city's African-descended historical figures) housed a number of the club's educational series.³⁸⁶ Price's lecture, being one of them, was thus a significant contribution; furthermore, it foreshadowed the ways in which her own legacy would be kept alive after her passing.

Price treated her father's diary as an artefact, his words as primary source material, and his lived experience as bare fact. Irrespective of whether his early Chicago aligned to the historical narrative that was understood and propagated in the white mainstream, his story remained and endured through time because of Price's care and attention to the historical record and to an African-American epistemology. This, too, is the dynamic through which Price's legacy has endured.

Price's daughter, Florence Robinson, similarly uplifted her mother's contributions. Additionally, the century-old tradition of African-American concert singers programming Negro Spirituals sustained a crucial canon—historiography, even—within the American art song genre. Therein, Price's arrangements have been treated as artefacts, her aesthetics as primary source material for the understanding of a black musical idiom in composition, and her lived experience as bare fact. The latter point is most pertinent in light of modern-day narratives that conflate the rediscovery of Price's works with the rediscovery of Price herself and therefore proclaim the rebirth of a composer whose legacy never died.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ "'Study Negro History' Says Stratton To Group," *Chicago Defender*, December 28, 1940, 19.

³⁸⁶ Knupfer, 81.

³⁸⁷ Alex Ross, "The Rediscovery of Florence Price: How an African-American composer's Works Were Saved from Destruction," *New Yorker*, February 5, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/02/05/the-rediscovery-of-florence-price>. Michael Cooper, "A Rediscovered African-American Female Composer Gets a Publisher," *New York Times*, November 15, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/15/arts/music/florence-price-music-publisher-schirmer.html>. Micaela Baranello, "Welcoming a Black Composer Into the Canon. Finally. [Originally titled, 'Once Overlooked, Now Rediscovered']," *New York Times*, February 9,

The 2009 discovery of numerous manuscripts, previously thought to be lost, is significant.³⁸⁸ However, the rediscovery narrative that has been constructed over the following decade—particularly in white mainstream media discourse in the United States—focuses more on Price’s personhood than her manuscripts. This narrative presents a form of “Columbusing,”—i.e., “the art of discovering something that is not new,” or, in the case of Price, *someone*.³⁸⁹ As A. Kori Hill writes, “The ‘rediscovered’ Black composer is a tired, damaging trope. It reflects an active process, where certain histories and cultural memories are not considered ‘relevant’ to the mainstream until they prove useful. Black musicians kept the name of Florence Price on their lips, in their minds, and under their fingers. She was not forgotten.”³⁹⁰ Black classical communities judged Price’s contributions to the musical literature as not only outstanding, but integral: this is the historiography within which I situate my scholarship and performances.

On April 7, 2019, I gave an afternoon recital at the former central branch of the Chicago Public Library, now known as the Chicago Cultural Center. The event was called “Of Folk, Faith & Fellowship: Exploring Chicago’s African-American Women

2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/09/arts/music/florence-price-arkansas-symphony-concerto.html>.

³⁸⁸ These manuscripts form the second addendum in the Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers. See David Priest, “The Long Lost Work of Florence Price Finally Comes Home,” *Arkansas Life*, May 24, 2018, <https://arkansaslife.com/22383-2/>.

³⁸⁹ Brenda Salinas, “‘Columbusing’: The Art of Discovering Something That Is Not New,” *NPR*, July 6, 2014, <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/07/06/328466757/columbusing-the-art-of-discovering-something-that-is-not-new>. Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr. shares similar sentiments, saying “Don’t ‘Christopher Columbus’ Florence Price studies” in response to the question of how Rae Linda Brown’s long-standing contributions to the field should be honored. See Marquese Carter, Carlene Brown, Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr., C. E. Aaron, “The Heart of a Woman, The Life of a Scholar,” panel discussion, online format, International Florence Price Festival, June 26, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/pricefest/videos/369166377391784/>.

³⁹⁰ A. Kori Hill, “To Be Rediscovered When You Were Never Forgotten: Florence Price and the ‘Rediscovered’ Composer (Tropes of Black Composers, Part One),” *Harry T. Burleigh Society*, November 29, 2018, <https://www.burleighsociety.com/blog/2018-11-29/florence-price-part-one>.

Composers.”³⁹¹ The program presented twentieth- and twenty-first-century musical Chicago as revealed through the piano solo literature of Price, Bonds, Dolores White, and Regina Harris Baiocchi.

Table 4.1: Of Folk, Faith & Fellowship: Exploring Chicago’s African-American Women Composers,” recital program.

Sonata in E minor: I. Andante-Allegro II. Andante III. Scherzo	Price
Troubled Water	Bonds
Azuretta	Baiocchi
Toccata	White
Fantasia Negre No. 1 in E minor	Price

The concert thematized classical manifestations of black folkloric influences as well as the sisterhood, support, and advocacy that underlies the music of Price and Bonds. I also engaged the legacies of Price and Bonds through the programming of Baiocchi and White. *Azuretta* (“little girl blue,” 2000) enabled me to communicate Baiocchi’s jazz influences, classical foundations, and new music trajectories in her pianistic tribute to the composer Hale Smith. With *Azuretta*, I could pivot from “Troubled Water” to Toccata (2011) and explore the stylistic continuity across the three works. White’s Toccata allowed me to illustrate the atonal and contrapuntal writing styles that are also a part of this musical history. Much like Price and Bonds, the programming of Baiocchi and White also encapsulated themes of sisterhood, support, and advocacy, since they are long-time collaborators from the new music collective

³⁹¹ Ege, “Of Folk Faith & Fellowship: Exploring Chicago’s African-American Women Composers,” recital, Chicago Cultural Center, April 7, 2019. For the playlist, see “Of Folk Faith & Fellowship: Exploring Chicago’s African-American Women Composers,” *YouTube*, August 21, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JnPVcvG92w&list=PLiJRS1Jr1IwRXSR6ui6A-OpvdbCC4k3aa>. Accessed March 1, 2020.

6Degrees Composers. Closing with *Fantasia Negre* recapitulated the program's overarching concepts.

After my performance, Baiocchi, White, and I addressed the audience.³⁹² I discussed my academic and personal journey from a general interest in Price to the current state of my scholarship. White elaborated upon the inspiration behind her Toccata and revealed more of her musical background, during which she shared the missed opportunity to study with Price during her childhood. Baiocchi voiced the reality of an incomplete canon that left me with an increased awareness of what it meant not just to present these works but to prepare them—to treat the scores as artefacts, the content as primary source material, and the context as bare fact—long before realizing their intent in the moment of performance. Her words reinforced the need to examine the music of black women composers beyond the framework of an incomplete or rediscovery narrative. They were a reminder of the narrow purviews that tend to restrict musical study in academia. Baiocchi said:

When you go through music school, you study the canon; and a lot of times, for black women composers, the canon is incomplete because most of the composers that we study are men, or European—most of whom are dead. And so, you rarely get to see the full canon. So, what you heard today is a part of the canon that is omitted. It is music written by people who look like Samantha, who look like me, who look like Dolores. And you know, there are black men composers too—fathom that!³⁹³

Toward the end of her speech, Baiocchi highlighted the venue's cultural and historical significance and described how my performance embodied the continued interaction between Price's music and her city. Baiocchi's recognition of how Price and her peers engaged this former branch of the Chicago Public Library with functions of musical performance and intellectual study seemed to exemplify victories over the racist and sexist dictates that have historically sought to discourage black women's agency in classical spheres:

³⁹² Ege, "Samantha Ege, Regina Harris Baiocchi and Dolores White on Chicago's Black Women Composers." *YouTube*, August 21, 2019.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dl7r7ywnNI>. Accessed January 3, 2020.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

When you hear Samantha play this music, you hear the spiritual energy of all of the women who she represented here today—all of whom came to this place, which used to be the main public library in Chicago. And all of those women that she played here today studied here, performed here; and it's so great to feel their energy and to feel that another generation has taken that on.³⁹⁴

Baiocchi's closing remarks affirmed that the aesthetics of Price were as much rooted in performance as they were in composition. After all, many of Price's compositions remained in manuscript form during her lifetime. Price acknowledged that she had, to quote her directly, "hundreds of unpublished and unsubmitted manuscripts."³⁹⁵ She identified her symphonies (nos. 1–4), piano concerto, concert overture, quintet, octet, fantasies (nos. 1–4 for solo piano, and a set for violin and piano duo), and sonatas (for solo piano, solo organ, violin and piano duo, and cello and piano duo) as some of the most worthy and publicly known works from her unpublished catalogue.³⁹⁶ However, her music ultimately lived in performance and endured in the artistry of African-American practitioners, as epitomized in Katherine Dunham's embodiment and Marian Anderson's "envoicement" (to borrow Alisha Lola Jones' terminology) of Price's catalogue.³⁹⁷

Later that year, Baiocchi invited me to perform *Azurreta* at NANM's Centennial Convention. I performed at the "Legacy Concert." This was the convention's closing event, held on July 19, 2019 at the Studebaker Theater in Chicago. The program additionally featured the third movement ("Juba Dance") of Price's Symphony No. 4 in D minor. NANM's 100th anniversary demonstrated the concerted efforts of African-American classical communities to ensure Price's music existed beyond manuscript form and lived in

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Correspondence, 1929–1953, Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a, Series I, Box 1, Folder 1) Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Jones, "Lift Every Voice."

performance. It reflected the consistent endeavors of African-American scholars to tell Price's story beyond her "proximity to Great White Male Composers."³⁹⁸ While Price's music has continued to experience peaks and troughs in its mainstream appeal, the Centennial Convention—an amalgamation of histories within histories—left me with the following conclusion: just as the aesthetics of Florence Price negotiated the dissonances of a New World nationalism, so, too, would her music negotiate the vicissitudes of a new century.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

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