



The Wailing Woman



With the Lincoln University Choir
Dr. Camilla Horne, Director of Choral Activities
and
Pennsylvania State (Berks Campus) University Campus Choir
Dr. David A. McConnell

Saturday, February 16, 2019
7:30 pm
Immanuel UCC
Shillington, PA

Sunday, February 17, 2019
3:00 pm
Lincoln University
Lincoln University, PA

Program

Sorida

Rosephanye Powell (b. 1962)

Precious Lord

Thomas A. Dorsey (1899-1993)

arr. Arnold Sevier (b. 19??)

Vox Philia and Lincoln University Choir

Dr. Camilla Horne, conductor

Reflection - *Rebecca Reppert*

Wailing Woman

He said they shunned him
Because his skin was black,
Underneath I felt akin
Because my nose was
Hooked, my folk despised.
Adonoy!

I stood beside the Wailing Wall,
A thousand years ago
In Palestine I prayed.
I beat my head against the stone,
But not all my crying nor my pleading
Could bring back the glory of Zion!

My race was hated, but my people rose,
Skyward they rose.
While others gave us only scorn.
And not all their hatreds

William Grant Still (1895-1978)

Nor their despisals could assure
Them that we were not great.
Adonoy!

So they built walls around my people;
Shut us off from themselves.
They did not know they needed us,
Nor did they know we needed them,

Were all of one flesh, all of one father,
The Jew and the Christian.
Their Christ was of us: Son of Mary,
Son of Joseph, their Holy Jesus.

They saw his Christian purity
But never guessed there might be purity
Even among the despised.

Poem by Verna Arvey (1910-1987)

Daizah Chiles, Soprano

Lincoln and Penn State (Berks) University Choirs

Vox Philia and Berks Sinfonietta

Dr. David A. McConnell, conductor

Reflection - Dr. Reverend Faison

No Mirrors in My Nana's House Ysaye M. Barnwell (b. 1946)

City Called Heaven Josephine Poelinitz (b. 1944)
Gracious White, Mezzo-Soprano

My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord Traditional Spiritual
arr. Moses Hogan (1957-2003)
Lincoln University Choir
Dr. Camilla Horne, conductor

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 1 in E minor (1932) Florence B. Price (1887-1953)

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Largo, maestoso
- III. Juba Dance
- IV. Finale

Program Notes

Wailing Woman (1946)

William Grant Still

William Grant Still was born in rural Mississippi and grew up with his widowed mother in Arkansas. It was a wholesome middle-class Black household with a piano and a collection of early single-face opera recordings, one where education and career plans were highly valued. She expected he would enter medicine, but music claimed his total interest when he entered college. He learned the blues and played oboe in the pit band of Eubie Blake's *Shuffle Along*. His ambition to write an orchestral work based on folklore resulted in the first symphony by a Black American, his *Afro-American Symphony* of 1930.

He benefited from the support available during the Harlem Renaissance, a time for acceptance of Black talent in music, theater, painting, and literature, not only in Harlem (a former Jewish ghetto of New York City), but in Atlanta, Chicago, Baltimore, Los Angeles, London, Paris and Berlin. Awards and grants made it possible for him to move to California. Here he wrote for films (which had just acquired sound tracks) endowing the cinema with a vocabulary of orchestral sonority to be followed by others. He also took advantage of the ecumenical spirit during the war years, reminding concert goers that persons of color were also American, as in the orchestral essay, *In memoriam*, to the colored soldiers who died for democracy (1943).

The theater was a prime love, however, and this resulted in a series of operas and ballets, most often to librettos and scenarios of his gifted wife, Verna Arvey, who was also a journalist and pianist. That collaboration produced the ballet *Miss Sally's Party* (1940) as well as the chorus, *Wailing Woman* (1946). Although he did have commissions for many works, it is symptomatic of his dedication to composition that *Wailing Woman* did not receive its first performance until a dozen years after his death, a fate that befell more than one work.

Still died two years after the Bicentennial in 1978. Just as he had regarded as his model Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912), the Afro-British composer who helped pave the way for the Harlem Renaissance with three

visits to the United States, William Grant Still was the example for those who followed him in his own country. It was he who was the first Black symphonic composer in this country, and the first of his race to conduct a major orchestra, to secure widespread performances and publications of his music, and whose work one hundred years after his birth-became sufficiently known for his role as a truly American composer to be evaluated, one who sought to fuse the disparate elements within his own heritage.

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Symphony No. 1 in E Minor (1932)

Florence Beatrice Price

In 1935 the African-American writer and composer Shirley Graham could boast of the accomplishments of America's first African-American symphonists: William Grant Still, Florence B. Price and William Dawson. "Spirituals to Symphonies in less than fifty years! How could they even attempt it?" she asked in an article in which she recounts the development of African-American art music from the triumphs of the Fisk Jubilee Singers and their concert spiritual arrangements in 1871 to the critical acclaim of Dawson's Negro Folk Symphony, premiered by the Philadelphia Symphony under Leopold Stokowski in 1934. William Grant Still's Afro-American Symphony was premiered by the Rochester Philharmonic in 1931 and Florence Price's Symphony in E minor was premiered by the Chicago Symphony in 1933.

What was the impetus behind the creation of the first symphonies by African-American composers? The spiritual inspiration came from the music of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, an Anglo-African composer and concert violinist who visited this country three times between 1904 and 1910 and who had won fame as a conductor and composer in England. Keenly interested in African-American folk music, Coleridge-Taylor wrote several compositions based loosely or directly on this source material including the well-known Twenty-Four Negro Melodies, Transcribed for the Piano (1905) and Symphonic Variations on an African Air (1906, based on the spiritual "I'm troubled in mind").

A more subtle but equally profound influence on African-American composers came from the “American” works of the Bohemian composer Antonin Dvorák who came to this country in 1892 to teach composition and to head the National Conservatory of Music in New York. During his three-year tenure here, the composer publicly advocated the use of African-American and Native-American folk music in composition to create a national American style. Dvorák heard African-American spirituals sung to him by his student Harry T. Burleigh, who would become one of America’s most celebrated baritone soloists and composers. Dvorák’s “American” works—the String Quartet, op. 96 and Quintet, Op. 97 and particularly the Symphony No. 9 From the New World, premiered by the New York Philharmonic in Carnegie Hall on December 15, 1893 –provided inspiration for a generation of American composers.

Thus, two internationally respected composers (and not coincidentally, both European) validated, for both black and white American composers, the beauty of African-American folk music and led the way for its use in instrumental forms.

Nationalism was the backdrop from which African-American composers in the 1920s and early 1930s adapted old artistic forms into self-consciously racial idioms. The affirmation of the values of the black cultural heritage had a decisive impact on Still, Price, and Dawson, who had as their primary goal the incorporation of Negro folk idioms, that is, spirituals, blues, and characteristic dance music in symphonic forms. In the orchestral music of these composers, the African-American nationalist elements are integral to the style. The deceptively simple musical structure of their orchestral music is inherently bound to the folk tradition in which they are rooted.

Florence Beatrice Smith Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas on April 9, 1887. After receiving her early music training from her mother, she attended the New England Conservatory of Music, graduating in 1906 after three years of study, with a Soloist’s diploma in organ and a Teacher’s diploma in piano. There she studied composition with Wallace Goodrich and Frederick Converse and she studied privately with the eminent composer George W. Chadwick, the Director of the Conservatory.

After completing her degree, Price returned south to teach music at the Cotton Plant-Arkadelphia Academy in Cotton Plant, Arkansas (1906); Shorter College in North Little Rock, Arkansas (1907-1910); and Clark University in Atlanta (1910-1912). In 1927, now married and with two children, Florence Price and her family moved to Chicago to escape the racial tension in the south which, by the late 1920s, had become intolerable. Here Price established herself as a concert pianist, organist, teacher and composer.

Price's Symphony in E minor was written in 1931. In a letter to a friend she wrote, "I found it possible to snatch a few precious days in the month of January in which to write undisturbed. But, oh dear me, when shall I ever be so fortunate again as to break a foot!" The Symphony won the Rodman Wanamaker Prize in 1932, a national competition which brought her music to the attention of Frederick Stock, who conducted the Chicago Symphony in the world premiere performance of the work in June 15, 1933 at the Auditorium Theater. The Symphony won critical acclaim and marked the first symphony by an African-American woman composer to be played by a major American orchestra.

Price based the first movement of her Symphony on two freely composed melodies reminiscent of the African-American spiritual. The influence of Dvorák in the second theme is most evident. The second movement is based on a hymn-like melody and texture no doubt inspired by Price's interest in church music. This such melody is played by a ten-part brass choir. The jovial third movement, entitled "Juba Dance," is based on characteristic African-American ante-bellum dance rhythms. For Price, the rhythmic element in African-American music was of utmost importance. Referring to her Third Symphony (1940) which uses the Juba as the basis for a movement, she wrote "it seems to me to be no more impossible to conceive "of Negroid music devoid of the spiritualistic theme on the one hand than strongly syncopated rhythms of the juba on the other." The Symphony closes with a tour de force presto movement based on an ascending and descending scale figure.

Price died in 1953 after receiving many accolades during her career. She wrote over 300 compositions, including 20 orchestral works and over 100 art songs. Her music was in the repertoire of many important ensembles.

In addition to the Chicago Symphony, these include the Michigan W. P. A. Symphony Orchestra, the Woman's Symphony Orchestra of Chicago, the U.S. Marine Band, and several chamber groups. Still widely performed, Price's songs were sung by many of the most renowned singers of her day including Marian Anderson for whom she wrote many of her art songs and spiritual arrangements, Ellabelle David, Etta Moten, Todd Duncan, and Blanche Thebom.

Florence B. Price is the first African-American woman composer to earn national recognition. A pioneer among women, she was much celebrated for her achievements in her time. With the resurgence of interest in her music, she is taking her place among those important composers of the 1930s and 1940s who helped to define America's voice in music. Price's music reflects the romantic nationalist style of the period but also the influence of her cultural heritage. Her music demonstrates that an African-American composer could transform received musical forms, yet articulate a unique American and artistic self.

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Dr. David A. McConnell, Artistic Director and Conductor

SOPRANO

Diana Ahmadi
Kathleen Bahena
Rebecca Diamond
Rachel Himes
Sarah Kreider
Tama McConnell
Tara Schumaker
Melissa Small

ALTO

Elizabeth Bromley
Alexis Carroll
Cassie Creswell
Deborah Graf
Amy Stewart Himes
Lauren Kuhn
Abby Marchione
Kate Miller

TENOR

Sean Michael Bathgate
Tate Dewalt
Joshua Gibson
Jordan Shomper

BASS

David Himes
Peter Graf
Stephen Longenecker
David Mengel

Vox Philia Board of Directors

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Vox Philia is a premier chamber choir located in Reading, Pennsylvania. Since 2012, the choir has quickly gained regional recognition, performing works from a wide range of musical periods and styles.

While “VOX” refers to voice, “PHILIA” is one of four Greek words for love, specifically, the love between friends. Aristotle defined this love as a pure delight in one another's company, and more profoundly, as an enjoyment of one another's character, even wanting what is best for others at the expense of one's self.

Highlights of the last few years include the American premiere of Alec Roth's oratorio *A Time to Dance*, performances with the Reading Symphony Orchestra of Bach's *Magnificat* and *Ein Feste Burg* cantata to honor the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, and the regional premiere of a new completion of Mozart's “Great” *Mass in C Minor* (K. 427) by Benjamin Gunnar-Cohrs, in performances that garnered considerable acclaim.

To learn more about the choir, and to support our work, please visit www.voxphilia.org.

Pennsylvania State University (Berks Campus) Campus Choir

Dr. David A. McConnell, Conductor

SOPRANO

Doreen C. Adabanya
Paige Anderson
Alexandra Brown
Olivia Hughes
Joann Longenecker
Katalina Smith
Lorena Tribe
Nicole Velazquez

ALTO

Wendy Futrick
Amaya Phillips
Jade Sterling
Takia Wilson

TENOR

Franz Borden
Joshua Brown-Campbell
Matthew Fry
Chung Han Huang

BASS

Michael Campbell
Justin Michael
Hageman
Samuel Quinlisk



BERKS
Sinfonietta

Dr. David A. McConnell, Artistic Director

VIOLIN I

Jennifer Sternick*
Nicolás Gómez Amín
Barbara Lanza
Alejandro Ortega
Emily McDonald
Gloria Royce

VIOLIN II

Amanda Bewley
James Gilmer
Janet Marquardt
Susan McDevitt
Ryujin Jensen
Tony Veloz

VIOLA

Kathleen Bahena
Natalie Conover
Richard Haines
Joshua Little
Anthony Scheuerman

CELLO

Jan Dixon
Jeannie Galick
Hyewon Jo

CELLO

Brian Mishler
Corrine Mohr
Lily Eckman

BASS

Skip Moyer
Amanda Mawson
Tim Raub

PICCOLO

Kaiti Hershey
Jacob Medina

FLUTE

Katherine Althen
Suzanne Francis

OBOE

Lauren Fairful
Kathy Horein

CLARINET

Julie Drey
Samuel Schreiber

BASSOON

Garrett Brown
Ann Cusano

HORN

Anne Nye
Patricia Kiline
Al Stokes
Faith Bentz

TRUMPET

Paul Breindenstine
Dustin Ciano

TROMBONE

John Metcalf
Michael Jordan
Isaiah Ebersole

TUBA

Ken Kemmerer

PERCUSSION

Andrew Cusano
Anthony Maldonado
Eilidh Wilson
Mitchell Kummerer

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Berks Sinfonietta is a 501(c)(3) chamber orchestra consisting of skilled musicians, including students and professionals, from Greater Reading/Berks County. Established in 2014, Berks Sinfonietta is made up of local musicians, dedicated to exploring the vast repertoire of all periods. One of its distinguishing characteristics is the intergenerational approach, where young professionals, advanced students and gifted amateurs come together to learn from one another and to create performances of unqualified excellence. We also intend to explore various aspects of performance practice, and to build a new audience for classical music through education and outreach.

If you would like to support the orchestra, or learn about our mission and concerts, please visit our website www.berkssinfonietta.org

Dr. David A. McConnell founded Vox Philia in 2012 as an intergenerational chamber choir made up of professional and gifted amateur singers. The choir's first three seasons focused almost exclusively on music by living composers, featuring over a dozen local and world premieres, as well as a newly-commissioned Christmas carol in December 2014. The choir's performances have garnered considerable acclaim for thematic programming and musical excellence.

In the summer of 2014, Dr. McConnell co-founded Berks Sinfonietta, a chamber orchestra that also utilizes an intergenerational approach, bringing professional Reading players together with gifted students in both high school and college. Highlights of the first season include well-regarded performances of Dvorak's Symphony No. 6 and Beethoven's Symphony No. 2, both conducted by McConnell.

Dr. McConnell teaches music courses at Pennsylvania State University, Berks Campus and Alvernia University in Reading. As Minister of Music at Immanuel UCC, he plays for weekly liturgies, conducts the Senior Choir and Bell Choir, oversees the training and rehearsing of four other choirs and manages an active concert series at the church.

Dr. McConnell received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music in December 2002. His teachers at Cincinnati included Earl Rivers, John Leman, Richard Westenberg and Vance George. A native of Philadelphia, Dr. McConnell also holds degrees from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey and Temple University in Philadelphia. He has attended the prestigious Pierre Monteux School for Conductors and Orchestral Musicians in Hancock, Maine, the South Carolina Conductor's Institute in Columbia, South Carolina, and The Conductors Institute at Bard College.

Dr. McConnell's has presented papers at the national American Choral Directors Association in San Antonio, Texas and the College Music Society Northeast Chapter Conference in Lewiston, Maine. Articles by Dr. McConnell have appeared in journals of the International Federation of Choral Music, the American Choral Director's Association, the Conductors' Guild and the American Beethoven Society. He has written a chapter on Beethoven's early Piano Concerto in E-flat for inclusion in a book being published about Beethoven's time in Bonn.

In recent years, Dr. McConnell has conducted choirs in Portugal, The Netherlands, and Latvia, as well as throughout the northeastern United States.

Berks Sinfonietta and **Vox Philia** *gratefully acknowledge* the Pastors, administration and congregation of Immanuel United Church of Christ for allowing us the use of their facilities for rehearsals and this performance. A special thank you to the Music Ministers of both churches, Karen Eddinger and Tom Yenser.

Berks Sinfonietta and **Vox Philia** are proud to present today's program to you. We thank the following individuals and organizations that make our 2018-2019 Season possible.

Berks Sinfonietta

Symphony No. 1 (\$1-\$99)

Helen & Dale Davis
Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Furrow
Deborah Gerhard
Elizabeth Keller
Annette & Sean Peppard
Alice Z. Slisher
Oscar Weber
Hajime YuKawa & Bruce Jensen

Symphony No. 2 (\$100-\$499)

Margaret Gechter
Patricia Gilmer
Cynthia E. Hix
Neil A. Hoffman
Mary & Robert Lee
Thomas Risi

Wyomissing Foundation
Claire & Eric Young

Anonymous
Kristina & Barton Smith

Symphony No. 3 (\$500-\$999)
Berks Arts Council/PA Council
on the Arts
Patricia Gilmer
Dr. Kerry & Barbara Lanza
Carole & Charles Lusch

Symphony No. 5 (\$2,000-\$4,999)
Anonymous
Reading Musical Foundation

Symphony No. 6 (\$5,000-\$9,999)
Arthur Judson Foundation

Symphony No. 4 (\$1,000-\$1,999)

Vox Philia

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Dr. Stephen Longenecker, Bone & Joint Care Center

Sponsor a concert (\$2000 and above)

Ronald and Kathy Klee

This evening's performance is made possible in part through a generous grant from the Arthur Judson Foundation: we are most grateful for this support. Both Berks Sinfonietta and Vox Philia received support from the Berks Arts Council and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts for its 2018-2019 season. We thank these agencies for their support.



Special thanks to Vox Philia's newest sponsor:



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MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW....

Sumptuous Serenade: Music for Winds

Join us for an evening of two well-established masterworks for wind ensembles, including Joachim Raff's Sinfonietta, Beethoven's Adagio in F, a fabulous Partita-Nonett by Franz Krommer and Richard Strauss's stunning Serenade for Winds. An evening of music to warm the heart and soul!

Saturday, November 17, 2018 at 7:30pm

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church

740 Cherry St, West Reading, PA 19611

Reserve tickets at by phone (484-509-1290)

or email (info@berkssinfonietta.org)

Tickets: \$15/Adult & \$5/Student

Angels Tell the Christmas Story

Join us for an evening of fabulous Christmas music by Archer, Chilcott, de Mets, Todd and Josquin's stunning Ave Maria, as well as local premieres of music honoring the Virgin Mary by James MacMillan and Arvo Pärt.

Let go of the seasonal stress to revel in magnificent choral music for Christmas!

Saturday, December 22, 2018 at 7:30pm

Immanuel United Church of Christ

99 S. Waverly Street, Shillington, PA 19607

Reserve tickets at by phone (610-777-7107)

or email (voxphilia@gmail.com)

Tickets: \$10/Adult & \$5/Student