Florence Price: An Analysis of Select Art Songs with Text by Female Poets

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

A doctoral essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

FLORENCE PRICE: AN ANALYSIS OF SELECT ART SONGS WITH TEXT BY FEMALE POETS

Christine Jobson

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Florence Price: An Analysis of Select Art Songs with Text by Female Poets

Abstract of a doctoral essay at the University of Miami.

Doctoral essay supervised by Dr. Esther Jane Hardenbergh.

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Florence Beatrice Price is a pioneer amongst African American composers. She was the first black woman to have one of her compositions played by a major American orchestra, the Chicago Symphony in 1934. In spite of her major accomplishments as a composer, many of her songs remain in obscurity. This document is an analysis of twelve of her art songs, only discovered in 2009 in an abandoned home just outside of St. Anne, Illinois. A detailed analysis of each piece is provided including a biography of each poet, a discussion of the text, pedagogical considerations, performance practice and expression, and accompaniment. A biography of the life and contributions of Florence Price as well as a brief history of African American Art song are also included in this document.
DEDICATION

In loving memory of my father,

Trevor Jobson

(October 29, 1949 - February 16, 2017)

He believed in me and is the reason that I am here today.

To my mother,

Clova Jobson, thank you for your enduring love, sage advice, and limitless support.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Esther Jane Hardenbergh, thank you for your patience and guidance throughout the writing process. Thank you for challenging me to think critically and to write so that the reader can “hear” the music.

Dr. Darryl Taylor, thank you for your support and advice.

I am also thankful for the meticulous research done by Dr. Rae Linda Brown, deceased.

Special thanks to each member of my committee:

Dr. Frank Ragsdale, Professor Robynne Redmon, and Dr. Dorothy Hindman
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Exposure to composers and poets of different backgrounds gives the young singer a well-rounded view and hopefully leads to an appreciation of art songs from many different cultures. In her article, “Reflecting Cultural Diversity in the Music Classroom,” René Boyer-White, reminds us that it is important for music teachers to “use cultural diversity as a means of developing their students’ music appreciation and aesthetic sensitivity.”

Voice students are often required to study and perform music from a variety of cultures, different languages, and historical periods. In particular, students are introduced to a segment of American art song literature that is primarily composed by white men. However, there is a body of repertoire written by African American composers that has been overlooked.

Historically, African American art songs have been dismissed, ignored, and not considered music worthy of study. They have been excluded from most major collections and anthologies of American Art songs. Anthologies for American art songs include the compositions of white male composers. Victoria Villamil’s book, A Singer’s Guide to the American Art Song: 1870-1980, which is regarded as one of the most comprehensive books on American Art song, reveals that the music of white male composers has been the focus of study and inclusion throughout history while female and African American

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compositions are excluded. Other American art song anthologies that exclude the compositions of African American composers include the G. Schirmer Collection of American Art Song, 15 American Art Songs, also published by G. Schirmer, American Art songs of the Turn of the Century edited by Paul Sperry, American Art song Anthology edited by John Belisle, Art Song in English edited by Carol Kimball, and Contemporary Art Songs: 28 Songs by American and British Composers published by G. Schirmer. G. Schirmer’s A New Anthology of American Song: 25 Songs by native American composers includes one song by an African American composer, “The Breath of a Rose” by William Grant Still. Although the songs included in these books have become a critical part of the vast repertoire available for voice teachers’ use, it is important for students to be exposed to a variety of cultures and styles in the voice studio.

While there are many cultures that have been overlooked, the African American culture stands out. Even more so, the African American female composer’s voice within the realm of art song composition is almost entirely absent. In his book, “Musical Landscapes in Color: Conversations with Black American Composers,” Dr. William Banfield provides a brief discussion of cultural exclusion:

“American concert music cannot be defined or adequately described without the inclusion of the background of the lives, perspectives, and music of African American artists, primarily because so much of what has shaped this country aesthetically was done by black artists. Some of the rationale for exclusionary practices inherent in traditional studies of concert music may be borrowed European notions of the “cultural hero” and affections associated with this concept. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner are all held up as examples of productivity and artistry, as cultural heroes, and well they should. Unfortunately, too much of the thinking about, and the values in, modern American “art music” was shaped by the desire in the United States to associate with the “best” of the modern Western world. Consequently, “cultural product” and its preservation are

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somehow linked to exclusionary practices in education and in institutions where serious music is performed.”

Although black music has been celebrated and appropriated outside of the realm of classical music, classical music written by black composers, especially the compositions of black female composers, has largely been excluded from the realm of “serious” or classical music. In order to bring the art songs of black women to the forefront, this research will focus on the vocal songs of African American, female composer, Florence Beatrice Price (1887-1953), that include poetry by women. Through the continued study of Price’s songs in research such as this, Florence Price’s songs may become more accessible for singers and voice teachers around the world.

The need for diversity of repertoire in the teaching studio is discussed in “Singing down the barriers: Encouraging singers of all racial backgrounds to perform music by African American composers” by Caroline Helton and Emery Stephens from New Directions for Teaching and Learning. This article provides valuable information addressing diversity and repertoire for singers is referenced. To continue the discussion of the need for diversity in the world of classical music at large, “Black Artistic Invisibility” an article from the Journal of Black Studies by William Banfield, and Willis Patterson’s article in the Black Music Research Journal entitled “The African-American Art Song: A Musical Means for Special Teaching and Learning” are referenced.

**Nearly Lost**

In the February 5, 2018 edition of the New Yorker, Alex Ross recounts the following story about the discovery of the missing Florence Price scores. In 2009, a

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couple named Vicki and Darrell Gatwood of St. Anne, Illinois were preparing to renovate an abandoned house outside of town. The house wasn’t in great condition. Thieves had all but destroyed the house. A fallen tree had torn a hole in the roof. In the part of the house that remained dry, Vicki and Darrell found a mysterious pile of documents including musical manuscripts, books, personal papers, and other documents. They noticed that one name kept appearing in the pile: Florence Price. They googled her and discovered that she was a composer based in Chicago who died in 1953. This old abandoned house had once been her summer home. They called the librarians at the University of Arkansas to tell them about their discovery and to find out if they were interested in the papers. Archivists soon realized that these were the missing scores! They had some Price scores in their possession, but the items found in this house were thought to have been lost forever. Twelve of the songs that were discovered in that dilapidated house are analyzed in this essay.

**History of African American Art Song**

An understanding of the history of the African American Art song must begin with a foundational understanding of what a song is. A song is “a short metrical composition intended or adapted for singing.” According to the Oxford Encyclopedia Online, “An art song is intended for the concert repertory, as opposed to a traditional or popular song.” This differs from the folk song, which usually has unknown origins and “is handed down orally from generation to generation and often exists in different forms

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6 Dictionary.com s.v. "Song."

7 Grove Music - Oxford Music Online s.v. “Art Song.”
An African American art song then is an art song written by an African American, descendants of slaves brought to America from Africa, that represents a fusion of African, American, and European styles. For this paper, the term “African American” refers to black people throughout the African diaspora who are the descendants of slaves. “In much the same way that composers of the German Lied and the French embraced the forms of other cultures, African American Art Song grew out of post-slavery nationalism, and made use of the many styles of both African and European origin.”

In order to further explain what the African American art song is, black music scholar and former professor at Virginia State University, Dr. Aldrich Adkins suggests the characteristics of Black music in general:

1. Essentially music by black composers performed by black performers.
2. Music stemming from the black experience.
3. Music that includes the following characteristics in unique combinations:
   a. Pitch variations.
   b. Specific voice qualities.
   c. Smears, slurs, and other dramaturgical excitements.
   d. Use of microtones (written or implied).
   e. Overlapped antiphony.
   f. High level poly-rhythms
   g. Pentatonic and modal scales.

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8 Boyer-White, 50-54.
9 Lonieta Aurora Thompson Cornwall, "The African American Art Song: A Continuum in the Art of Song" (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 2006).
h. Spirituality (a high incidence of common church background).  

Because African Americans are the descendants of African slaves, the music created by this culture, regardless of the genre, is often colored by that experience. This is true for the African American art song. African Americans bring to their composition of art song a mixture of their experience as black people and their identity as Americans. African American art songs can contain elements of both art song and folk song. In the African American musical tradition, folk songs were passed down from generation to generation orally. Primary amongst the folk song tradition is the Negro spiritual. These songs were born of the experience of African slaves brought to America against their will. Like the Negro spiritual, the African American art song is a result of a mixture of different styles of music coming together in one genre. African American Art songs are a tool that can be used to share the history of African American people through music, just as Negro Spirituals have been used in the past. They represent an inside view to the life and culture of African Americans.  

“The problem of definition takes on added perplexity as one considers the art songs of African-American composers. After all, many of these songs, like most other forms of music created and developed by African Americans, may be properly thought of as being derivatives from the Negro spiritual, that great ocean of black music beginnings. The Negro spiritual certainly qualifies as a folksong. Yet, in the hands of African American composers, these folksongs have been arranged in such a fashion as to make them a hybrid of song form. The melody and harmonic structure of Negro spirituals have, in most cases, been handed down through oral transmission of culture from generations of slaves and their descendants. Composers have subsequently written out specified accompaniments

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and somewhat standardized the spiritual’s melodic and harmonic form in publication.

It is my contention, therefore, that the first African-American art songs were those settings and arrangements of spirituals that were originated by such pioneers of song composition as Harry T. Burleigh, Nathaniel Dett, Hall Johnson, Frederick Hall, Edward Boatner, and others. “

For the purposes of this paper, Negro spirituals and African American Art songs will be regarded as two separate song forms although some elements of the Negro spiritual do appear in African American Art songs. Negro spirituals and African American Art songs were both used as tools for sharing history. They are examples of both art song and folk song as they were written down and given colorful accompaniments, which are mixtures of many different styles: jazz, the blues, classical music, gospel, ragtime, etc.

One of the major differences between European art song and African American Art song is the subject matter. Dr. Willis Patterson explains that a significant portion of European art song text was “taken from creative musings on nature, mythology, and sentiments on the ultimate things of life.” Many African American art songs “focus on the circumstances of life and its travails” and things that happen in everyday life. Patterson points out that composer Margaret Bonds uses the text of Langston Hughes in this manner in her “Dream Variation.” Bonds is able to tell the stories of black people who had just been released from slavery and those who participated in embarrassing and offensive minstrels shows to appease and entertain white people. She is also able to draw us into the imagination of a black person who escapes from reality by dreaming and imagining. The listener is forced to face the reality that black people, were not seen as

12 Patterson, 304.
13 Patterson, 304-305.
14 Patterson, 303-310.
equal to their white counterparts and would often be subjected to eating in the kitchen or some other hidden area “when company comes.”\textsuperscript{15} The beauty of this particular set of poetry is that it ends with the hope that one day the speaker will be appreciated, seen as beautiful, and given a seat at the table.

**African American Music History Timeline**

In order to trace the history of this dynamic genre of music, Dr. Hansonia Caldwell, professor of music emeritus at California State University Dominguez Hills, provides a resource guide. This invaluable timeline outlines the development of African American Art Song throughout history. Below is an excerpt from her outline in which Dr. Caldwell divides the “full African American Diaspora Evolution” into 6 stages:\textsuperscript{16}

**African American Performers and Composers of the Art Song: A Chronology**

Stage 1: Cultural Birth in the African Homeland the creation of communal culture within the African homeland

African musical traditions that are integral to the Black Aesthetic:

- Call and response structure
- Group expression
- Improvisation
- Rhythmic complexity
- Downward flowing melodic lines
- Use of percussion
- Blending of music and movement
- Use of harmonic, pitch and timbre flexibility

Stage 2: 1440 - 1870 - Dislocation Birth of the African Diaspora & The Terror of the Transatlantic Holocaust

Stage 3: 1619 - 1865 - Africans in the Americas, Stage A (Enslavement, Escape into New Africa)

\textsuperscript{15} Patterson, 304.

• The European Art Song of the nineteenth century is born.  
• The songs often become celebrations of national identity.  
• The compositions of some 19th century composers become integral to the performance repertoire of 20th century African American art song singers.

Stage 4: 1865 - 1900 - Africans in the Americas, Stage B (Emancipation & Institution - Building in spite of Jim Crow & Racism)

- 1860s - African American singers become connected to opera  
- 20th Century - the number of composers and professional concert singers increases

Stage 5: 1896 - 1990 - Africans in the Americas, Stage C (Cultural Renaissance I/Pan Africanism)

- 1900-1945 - Composers begin to write art song repertoire using the melodies of the Negro Spiritual. These works became known as the concert spiritual. African American performers make this an important part of their performance repertoire

Stage 6: 1956 - Present - Africans in the Diaspora (Pan African/Transnational Cultural Renaissance II)\(^\text{17}\)

The influence of European musical styles began during enslavement and would continue long after emancipation. Referring to developments in the history of German lieder, Caldwell notes, “These nineteenth century songs are noted for their artistic combination of music and poetry. The songs often become celebrations of national identity. The compositions of the above 19th century composers become integral to the performance repertoire of 20th century African American art song singers. These Lieder also become models for many of the 20th century works of African American composers.”\(^\text{18}\) According to Dr. Aldrich Adkins, “Within the three decades following the Civil War, black musicians were enrolled in all of the leading music schools and

conservatories in America and Europe.”19 Thus, they received a formal introduction to classical music as a whole, and art song composers in particular.

The African influence on the African American art song and on Black music in general must begin with an understanding of where African slaves were kidnapped. Dr. Adkins provides a detailed description, which explains that African slaves came from the western coast of Africa. “Most of the slaves were taken from that region which stretches from the bulge of Africa at the Senegal River in the north, around the great bend to the Guinea Coast, along the Bight of Benin down to the southern tip of what is now Portuguese Angola.” He goes on to explain that slaves also came from other areas like Sierra Leone in South Africa amongst other areas. The music of Africa is vastly diverse, varying from country to country and from tribe to tribe.

Kyagambiddwa, Ugandan composer and poet, describes the relationship between music and language in Africa: “It is the people’s race and language that determines the nature and character of its music. Like the language, like the music! Several peoples or tribes speaking the same language have basically the same kind of music. African music is simply the offspring of the people’s language. And, wonderful to know, each African language is tuned to a certain fitting scale.”20 To know African music is to know the language. In other words, groups of people or tribes that speak the same language basically have similar kinds of music. Because of this association between language and music, Adkins was able to further provide associations between regions and styles of music. He provides this list:

1. Western Africa
   a. Heterometric rhythm
   b. Rhythmic polyphony
   c. Melodic and harmonic major thirds
   d. Lack of minor thirds

2. Eastern Africa
   a. Use of perfect fifths
   b. Use of minor seconds
   c. Isometric and simple rhythms

Since most slaves came from the Western region of Africa, it further helps us to understand what musical influences Africans brought with them to America when they were stolen from their homes. Those musical influences would be passed down from generation to generation, intermingled with the American/European culture of their slave owners.

There certainly has been an exchange of ideas between the dominant white culture in America and Black Americans. This exchange of ideas is natural and happens between creators of art within different cultures. Although the exchange of musical ideas is understood and inevitable, there has been some debate about the nature of that exchange.

Undine Smith Moore notes:

“White composers, being a part of the dominant culture, do not know or participate in the culture of the black man. With a highly institutionalized racism, they have not shared the common memories, sufferings, aspirations, modes of dress and speech, styles of life characteristic of those they have educated to feel inferior. To speak more simply, white men do not know the quality of black life.

On the other hand, on whatever status level, black people are aware of the qualities of life of white people. As gardeners, cooks, nurses of white children, bar workers, street cleaners, garbage men, prisoners, hotel bellhops, seamstresses, persons in the courts, in the educational world, and in the business world, black people know all their lives the inner workings of white life. Besides, since the entire educational system of America, by design, inducts every black into American culture with its European heritage. Furthermore, the black man, though

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21 Aldrich Wendell Adkins, "The Development of Black Art Song" (Austin: The University of Texas at Austin, 1971), 19.
of African descent, is an American and is entitled to whatever is available to any other American. It must always be remembered, I repeat, that he is not merely an American, but an American with special memories, sufferings, and aspirations.

The point is that the black composer has a more genuine and extensive participation in both cultures (his own and that of whites) while whites have real participation only in their own culture. To sum up, a black man writing in a “white” style is thus not writing out of the periphery of an experience which he knows only superficially. His blackness does not limit his choices; it amplifies them.”

Therefore, when a black person writes an African American art song, he is writing in a style that is a unique expression of the African American experience.

The following resources provide key information regarding the history of African American Art song: Aldrich Adkins’s dissertation entitled “The Development of the Black Art Song” (DMA dissertation, University of Texas, 1971), two books entitled From Spirituals to Symphonies: African American Women Composers and Their Music, by Helen Walker-Hill and Black Women and Music: More Than the Blues, edited by Eileen M. Hayes and Linda F. Williams are referenced. Dr. Patterson’s. Anthology of Art Songs by Black American Composers also contains important historical information regarding African American Art Song.

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Chapter 2

Florence Beatrice Price Biography

Florence Beatrice Price was born in 1887 in Little Rock, Arkansas. Her father, Dr. James H. Smith, was a dentist and her mother, Florence Irene Gulliver Smith was a businesswoman. Mrs. Smith was also Florence’s childhood piano teacher. Florence Beatrice and her sister, Florence Gertrude, lived with their parents in her birthplace, Little Rock, Arkansas for much of their childhood, although Florence’s sister would die before age seven.

Florence Beatrice’s parents were mixed race, or mulatto, and members of the socio-economic elite in their community. Because of the Smith family’s light skin and Caucasian features, they were afforded “a certain amount of freedom to move about Little Rock unrestricted and to enjoy opportunities to advance economically.”\(^{23}\) Dr. Smith and his wife were able to afford the children a middle-class upbringing that was reserved for the elite African American social class to which they belonged. The Smith home was often opened up to African American musicians and artists who were traveling in the area and in this way; Florence was exposed to the black artistic community.

Her father Dr. James H. Smith, “a published author, teacher, and inventor,”\(^ {24}\) was one of the most respected black men in Little Rock. Not only was he an accomplished dentist, Smith was also the only black dentist in their town and had both black and white patients before Jim Crow laws were put into place. However, when Jim Crow laws were instituted in the 1890s when Price was a just


a little girl, all blacks, regardless of their social status and skin color, were “stripped of their basic human rights.”

At age 14, Florence Beatrice attended the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston (1903-1907) where “she studied composition and counterpoint with Benjamin Cutter, George Chadwick from the New England School of Composers, and Frederick Converse, also a student of Chadwick.” While attending the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Price met her mentor, George Whitefield Chadwick, who gave her a scholarship to be a student in his private studio and urged her to use elements of Negro spirituals in her works. She would learn to masterfully weave these timeless melodies into her complex compositions.

She graduated with honors in 1907 and was awarded an artist diploma and a teaching certificate. After graduating, the nineteen year old Florence Beatrice returned to Arkansas where she taught, for one year, at the Cotton Plant-Arkadelphia Academy in Cotton Plant, a school for blacks supported by a white northern church organization. In September 1910, at just 23 years old, she accepted a position at Clarke Atlanta University as head of the music department. While there, she exposed the students to nationally and internationally recognized African American artists by bringing them to campus for concerts. In 1912, Florence Beatrice won a faculty position in the music department at Shorter College in North Little Rock Arkansas in 1912. In that same year, she married Thomas J. Price, a practicing attorney with whom she had three children: Tommy,

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Florence Louise, and Edith. Sadly, Tommy died during childhood. Price would later set a poem by Julia Davis, *To My Little Son*, in order to honor his memory.

In 1926, the Price family experienced financial hardship because Mr. Price’s law practice was failing. In addition, rising racial tension in Little Rock was becoming unbearable. The Price family moved to Chicago in 1927, along with other prominent black families, “after the lynching of a black man accused of assaulting a white woman.”27 The lynching took place on the corner of a wealthy black neighborhood. Mrs. Price made the best of her move to Chicago and became very active as a composer, teacher, and performer. According to Dr. Rae Linda Brown, Price continue to compose and establish relationships with publishing companies:

> “Once settled in Chicago, Price continued writing teaching pieces for children—primarily for piano, but also some for organ and for violin with piano accompaniment. Creating a niche for herself in this genre, she easily secured publishers and found these compositions to be a profitable endeavor. She established long-term relationship with Chicago’s McKinley Music Company, which began to publish her music from 1928. The firm published more than twenty-five of Price’s compositions during her career. Other Chicago publishers of Price’s teaching pieces include Gamble Hinged Music and Clayton F. Summy. In addition, Theodore Presser, Carl Fisher, and G. Schirmer published her teaching pieces as well as her concert works for piano.”28

She spent the summers of 1926 and 1927 studying composition with Carl Busch and harmony and orchestration with Wesley La Violette at the Chicago College of Music and while there also completed a course in Public School Music Methods. In addition, she attended, the Chicago Teachers College, Chicago University, Central Y.M.C.A. College, Lewis Institute, and the American Conservatory in Chicago (1929).29

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Florence Price’s move to Chicago was rewarding in many ways. One of the most valuable connections made was her meeting musician Estella C. Bonds, mother of Margaret Bonds. Price taught Margaret Bonds piano and composition and the two became good friends. Estelle Bonds even allowed Price and her two daughters to live with them for a period of time when she was struggling financially after her divorce from Mr. Price (1931). Although Price later remarried, she didn’t change her name. “As a result of her friendship with Margaret Bonds, Florence was introduced to Marian Anderson and Langston Hughes, two individuals who would later become very important to her success as a composer.” Florence Price set many of African American poet Langston Hughes’ text to music throughout her career. Marian Anderson was one of the most celebrated singers of the 20th century and was a pivotal part of the Civil Rights movement. She worked tirelessly so that black singers could perform for desegregated audiences. In 1939, Marian Anderson sang, Price’s song, “My Soul’s Been Anchored in de Lord” at her historic Lincoln Memorial concert, and Miss Anderson included her Song to the Dark Virgin on her second American concert tour. Three publishers, equally impressed by the song, asked to publish it. Eugene Stinson, music critic of the Chicago Daily News commented, ‘Song to the Dark Virgin was, as Miss Anderson sang it, one of the greatest immediate successes ever won by an American song. G. Schirmer published the song in 1941.” It is notable that a woman of Marian Anderson’s stature would chose to perform Price’s songs and make them a regular part of her recitals and concerts.

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32 Brown, xxxiii.  
33 Green, 35.
While in Chicago, Price wrote a number of popular songs, often under the pen name “Vee Jay.” Some pieces were sung in the theater or arranged for radio performances\(^{34}\), and she used the texts of fellow Chicagoans, Sal Janeway Carrol, Grace Linley, Frank Blaha and Joseph R. Gregory, for these compositions between 1928 and 1930.

In 1932, she submitted four pieces to the Wannamaker competition, a prestigious, national competition that gave recognition and awarded prizes to African American composers in areas such as songs, piano compositions, and symphonic works. Price won several prizes including the $500 first prize in the orchestral work category for her *Symphony in E Minor* and honorable mention for her tone poem, *Ethiopia’s Shadow in America* in the same category. Her *Piano Sonata in E minor* won a $250 award and her *Fantasie No. 4 for piano* won Honorable Mention. Her student, Margaret Bonds, won the remaining prize money, $250, for her song, *The Sea Ghost*.\(^{35}\) In 1940, Price was inducted into the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers for her contributions as a composer.

Florence Price was a leader in her community and an active member of the Chicago Music Association. She would often give talks on current events, accompany association members of the club on piano or organ, and provide demonstrations on rare keyboard instruments. She would compose music for club members and performed her own compositions.\(^{36}\) Dr. Rae Linda Brown, notable Florence Price specialist and former professor at the University of California Irvine and the University of Michigan, notes that

\(^{34}\) Brown, xxvi.
\(^{35}\) Brown, xxxviii.
\(^{36}\) Brown, xxv.
Price was seen as a “symbol of professional achievement and personal tenacity.”\(^{37}\) Those words sum up very well the impact that Florence Price had on her community and on the world.

Florence Price was “the most widely known African American woman composer from the 1930s to the 1950s.”\(^{38}\) Most notably, she was the first to have one of her compositions played by a major American orchestra, the Chicago Symphony under the direction of Frederick Stock, in 1934.\(^{39}\) Her *Symphony in E Minor*, Dr. Rae Linda Brown notes, is “a work that represents the musical culmination of a ‘cultural awakening’ referred to as the Harlem Renaissance or New Negro Movement.” Dr. Brown goes on to explain that Price’s primary goal in this piece was to feature Negro folk materials which includes spirituals, dance music, cross rhythms, call and response, and the use of percussive polyrhythmic features and syncopation, hand clapping and foot tapping. “These African-American nationalist elements are integral to the composition’s style.”\(^{40}\) Her works would also be performed by the Women’s Symphony Orchestra of Chicago and by various African American organizations such as the National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM). “NANM is an organization that is arguably the most important classical music organization for blacks from the 1920s on.”\(^{41}\) NANM would also start a third Chicago branch called the Florence B. Price Music Study Guild.\(^{42}\) NANM is particularly important for the dissemination and performance of compositions of black musicians.

\(^{37}\) Brown, xxxvii.
\(^{38}\) Brown, xv.
\(^{39}\) Brown, xv.
\(^{40}\) Brown, xliii.
\(^{41}\) Brown, xxv.
\(^{42}\) Brown, xxxvii.
Many of her compositions were performed during her lifetime, however, only a few of them were published until the recent acquisition of her compositions by Schirmer Music Publishing. She wrote a variety of compositions including piano, vocal, organ, and orchestral music. Although Florence Price experienced some success in the midst of struggle as a black, female composer during the height of America’s segregated and racist history, her story is not without disappointment and rejection. In 1935, Price wrote Serge Koussevitzky, conductor of the Boston Symphony, hoping that he would allow the orchestra to perform one of her works:

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 as the composer of two songs, one or the other of which Marian Anderson includes on most of her programs) to even consent to examine a score.

I confess that I am woefully lacking in the hardihood of aggression; that writing this letter to you is the result of having successfully done battle with a hounding timidity. Having been born in the South and having spent most of my childhood there I believe I can truthfully say that I understand the real Negro music. In some of my work I make use of the idiom undiluted. Again, at other times it merely flavors my themes. And at still other times thoughts come in the garb of the other side of my mixed racial background. I have tried for practical purposes to cultivate and preserve a facility of expression in both idioms, although 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.

Will you examine one of my scores?

Yours very sincerely,

(signed) (Mrs.) Florence B. Price

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43 Brown, xxxv-xxxvi.
Dr. Koussevitzky rejected her request, as would other conductors, but that did not stop Florence Price from making an indelible mark on American music history. In 1951 Price received a telegram from Sir John Barbirolli, conductor of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester, England. He was made aware of her accomplishments during his tenure as the conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (1936-42). He asked Price to write a concert overture that was based on Negro Spirituals. Price wrote the work, but was unable to attend the performance because she became ill and had to spend time in the hospital. Once her health improved, she continued to write and her music was premiered in several American venues. Her music was even performed by the United States Marine Band. They regularly performed her “Three Negro Dances” during the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the spring of 1953, Price planned another trip to Europe so that she could receive an award in Paris, take a vacation with her close friend, Perry Quinney Johnston, and meet with music publishers while there. They planned to sail from New York to Le Havre, France on May 26, 1953; however, her trip was cancelled because she had to be hospitalized again. After ten days in the hospital, she died on June 3, 1953. Her funeral was held at Grace Presbyterian Church two days later. She is buried in the Chicago Lincoln Cemetery.

For further research and understanding about Florence Price’s life, “Lifting the Veil: The Symphonies of Florence Price” by Dr. Rae Linda Brown which is included at the beginning of Florence Price’s Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3 is of paramount importance. The following dissertations provide a detailed study of her life: “Selected Orchestral Music of Florence B. Price (1888-1953) in the Context of Her Life and Work,” Ph. D.

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44 Brown, xxxvii.
45 Brown, xxxvi-xxxvii.
Chapter 3

Methodology

Songs have been collected from the Florence Price Special Collections housed in the University of Arkansas- Fayetteville Library. Each song is presented with a short biography of each poet, a discussion of the text, pedagogical considerations, performance practice and expression, and accompaniment.

Biographical information about the poets were found in a variety of sources including Joyce Pettis Owens, *African American Poets: Lives, Works, and Sources*, *Britannica Encyclopedia*, Maureen Honey’s *Shadowed Dreams: Women's Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance*, and the Poetry Foundation’s website. For guidance on how to properly analyze a song, the following books, *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music* and *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* by Carol Kimball is referenced. “The Solo Vocal Repertoire of Richard Hundley: A Pedagogical and Performance Guide to the Published Works” by Esther Jane Hardenbergh is used as a guide on how to provide analysis of a song.

Level of Difficulty

Each song will be designated as easy, intermediate, or advanced based on the following criteria:

Easy

- The range and tessitura are comfortable for the average singer and stays away from the extremes of the vocal range (high and low)
• Rhythms are simple including mostly whole notes, half notes, quarter notes, and some eighth notes
• The melody line features mostly conjunct intervals and is often doubled by the accompaniment
• The accompaniment is supportive and clearly outlines any key changes
• The tempo allows for easy articulation of text
• Phrase length is short enough for singers to sing without breathing in the middle of the line and there is enough time to take a relaxed breath in between phrases
• The meaning of the poetry is easily understood

Intermediate

• The range and tessitura of the piece visits the limits of the vocal range, but doesn’t remain there for long periods of time
• Rhythms are somewhat more difficult, periodically using dotted rhythms and shorter note values that require better musicianship to count
• The melody line features some conjunct movement, but makes use of disjunct intervals as well
• The accompaniment is mostly supportive throughout, but not always
• The tempo doesn’t always allow for easy articulation of text
• The phrase length requires the ability to manage the breath to make it through longer phrases
• The poetry requires some analysis in order to be understood
**Advanced**

- The range and tessitura of the piece requires the singer to be completely comfortable singing at the extremes of the vocal range, the passaggio, and throughout the vocal range.
- Rhythms are very difficult using a variety of note values that could be challenging to count and shifting time signatures.
- The melody line uses mostly disjunct intervals that are hard to hear.
- The accompaniment is mostly unsupportive throughout and tempi are singer led.
- Phrase length makes it very difficult to find moments to breathe and requires the ability to sing long phrases.
- The poetry requires detailed analysis in order to be understood.

Range will be determined based on the highest and lowest pitches in a piece. Tessitura will be assessed based on the frequency that pitches appear in a piece. Middle C is referred to as C4.
Chapter 4

Analysis of Songs

“When the Green Lies Over the Earth”

Poet - Angelina Grimké (1880-1958)

Range - B3-G5

Tessitura - D4 - D5

Vocal Difficulty - Intermediate

Text -

“When the Green Lies Over the Earth”

When the green lies over the earth, my dear,
A mantle of witching grace,
When the smile and the tear of the young child year
Dimple across its face,
And then flee, when the wind all day is sweet
With the breath of growing things,
When the wooing bird lights on restless feet
And chirrups and trills and sings
To his lady-love
In the green above,
Then oh! my dear, when the youth's in the year,
Yours is the face that I long to have near,
Yours is the face, my dear.
But the green is hiding your curls, my dear,
Your curls so shining and sweet;
And the gold-hearted daisies this many a year
Have bloomed and bloomed at your feet,
And the little birds just above your head
With their voices hushed, my dear,
For you have sung and have prayed and have pled
This many, many a year.
And the blossoms fall,
On the garden wall,
And drift like snow on the green below.
But the sharp thorn grows
On the budding rose,
And my heart no more leaps at the sunset glow,
For oh! my dear, when the youth's in the year,
Yours is the face that I long to have near,
Yours is the face, my dear
“When the Green Lies Over the Earth” is a bittersweet song, featuring a beautiful sweeping melody line that rests on a solid foundation of rippling 16th notes in the piano and a text that is somber yet hopeful. The text is layered and means more than what meets the eye at first glance.

**Angelina Grimké- Biographical Information**

Angelina Grimké (1880-1958) was born in Boston, Massachusetts into a prominent biracial family of abolitionists and civil rights leaders. She was a poet, playwright, and an important figure of the Harlem Renaissance. Abolitionists Angelina and Sarah Grimké were her great aunts. Angelina, became the first woman to address the Massachusetts State Legislature in February 1828 when she brought a petition signed by 20,000 women in an attempt to end slavery. Her father, an emancipated slave, son of a white aristocrat, and a Harvard Law School graduate, served as the Vice-President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Her mother, Sarah Stanley, was a white woman from a middle-class family who opposed their interracial union. After their divorce, Angelina, lived with her mother for 7 years. She was then sent to live with her father and Angelina never saw her mother again. She was educated at elite schools where she was often the only African-American in her class and was largely shielded from the horrors of racism. As an adult, she taught in high schools in Washington D. C. and is credited with being the first African American to write a successful drama interpreted by African American actors. She was encouraged in her pursuits as a creative writer by Georgia Douglas Johnson. Her poetry is “often about lost

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love, praise for famous African Americans, and racial concerns.”^47 Although, none of her poems were published in her lifetime, one of her most well-known poems is “When the Green Lies Over the Earth.”^48

Discussion of Text

On the surface, Grimké’s poem expresses how one longs only to see the face of his or her lover when everything is green and beautiful, as in springtime. Upon deeper analysis, this piece also talks about how that loved one has passed away and outlines the changes in the natural surroundings of that loved one’s final resting place. The juxtaposition of the mood of the music to the subject of the veiled but somewhat morbid poetry provides a very jarring yet effective contrast.

The speaker realizes that he will never see his loved one again and thus his “heart no more leaps at the sunset glow.” The passage of time is evident within sections like “the gold-hearted daisies this many a year have bloomed and bloomed at your feet” and “for you have sung and have prayed and have pled this many, many a year.” Even though the seasons change, the blossoms bloom and eventually “the blossoms fall on the garden wall,” the love of the speaker never diminishes. The overall mood of the accompaniment and melody line captures a spirit of exuberance and joy while still making sense within the context of the poetry.


Pedagogical considerations

This piece is marked as intermediate primarily because of the higher tessitura which causes issues with text articulation. For example, the most difficult section of this piece for the singer is measures 10 through 14. Here, the tessitura for the piece changes briefly and lies on the upper part of the staff with one note above the staff (G4 to G5) (Figure 1). The melody line covers the space of an octave. Enunciation of text becomes a bit more difficult because the range is higher, but the composer assists with the negotiation of this new tessitura by marking this section with crescendo. It is often easier to sing texts that are higher in the vocal range at a louder dynamic level. In addition, the text for this section (measures 13-14) is, “with the breath of growing things.” Here Price gives the listener the opportunity to actually hear the breath of growing things with the increased volume and higher notes. Measure 12 is also an indication of growth because it is marked a tempo, indicating an increase in speed. The end of measure 14, marked poco ritardando, introduces an example of text painting, as the gently “wooing bird lights on restless feet. This decrease in tempo gives the singer the opportunity to deliberately enunciate the text.
While the range of this piece (B3 to G5) is a bit low for some sopranos, the low B’s only last for one or two beats and move along quickly in 6/8 time signature. The rhythm is mostly simple, alternating between 8\textsuperscript{th} notes and 16\textsuperscript{th} notes. The pulse of the music is in no way irregular and falls naturally on the first and third beats. An important change from F major in the first section (measures 1 to 28) to B flat major in the second section (measures 29-48) reveals an indication of a change in sentiment as the singer is now describing the burial ground and resting place of his loved one. The text describes that “the green is hiding your curls my dear,” implying that the loved one is buried and their beauty is being hidden by the grass. The speaker also points out that “the gold-hearted daisies this many a year have bloomed and bloomed at your feet.” So many years
have gone by since the lover has been buried that he has been able to watch the daisies bloom at the feet of the burial plot. In the third and final section (measures 49-60) the piece returns to F major, both following the broad form of ABA and illustrating the speaker’s unchanging, resolute and sad heart. This harmonic change is not abrupt and is clearly outlined in the piano accompaniment. He longs only to see the face of this lover in this text, “yours is the face that I long to have near”. During measures 36-38, the vocal line begins to move chromatically, which simply adds variety and emphasis to a statement that has already been made, “your is the face my dear.” This section is doubled an octave higher in the piano accompaniment, making the line easier to sing.

**Performance Practice and Expression**

The mood provided by the text is one of deep longing and eternal love as the speaker declares his desire to see the face of his deceased lover. He speaks directly to his lover rather than using the third person. The singer should consider picturing a loved one while singing and center their focus visually in a specific area. Address the piece to that person by maintaining eye contact with the imagined loved one and delivering the piece with passion. All tempo markings are very important to the overall ebb and flow of the piece. This piece should not be performed with a strict *allegretto* tempo, but should shift from a slower tempo back into the *allegretto* tempo each time. Each shift represents a change in emotion or thought. The singer should be careful not to allow the slower tempo to become slower than is indicated in order to keep the piece from dragging. When singing the last “dear” in the last measure on F5, one should feel free to modify the vowel as necessary to allow the tone to ring freely without delivering a pinched [i] vowel.
**Accompaniment**

The accompaniment of “When the Green Lies Over the Earth” is a prime example of Price’s affinity for using florid groupings of repeated sixteenth notes. She also provides a roadmap of the connectivity she expects by marking slurs over each phrase in the piano part. The singer, however, must sing even longer phrases than what is marked for the pianist. The piano accompaniment is very supportive, with accompaniment that matches the tonality of the melody line. Often, the notes for the melody line are arpeggiated in the accompaniment. There are several sections where the vocal line is doubled by the piano, giving the singer additional support. Price captures the freedom and joy that lies in the heart of the speaker by setting this piece in 6/8 time signature with consistent 16\(^{th}\) notes in the accompaniment throughout most of the piece. Measures 1 through 7, for example, use the same exact groupings of 16\(^{th}\) notes, seven times (Figure 2). This highlights the monotony of passing time and further indicates that the intention of the speaker, to see the face of his lover, does not change. Variations of this musical figure appear throughout the piece, but it does not appear again in its original form until the third section, which is also the return to the original key (F major). This return to this musical figure in its original form further highlights that the speaker remains unwavering in his desire to see his lover’s face. Measures 50 and 51 (Figure 3) of the piano accompaniment are exactly the same as the first seven. Thereafter (the next two measures) the figure is altered in the treble clef, but remains largely intact in the bass clef.
Figure 2. *When the Green Lies Over the Earth*, mm. 1-9

Allegretto

When the green lies over the earth, my dear, A mantle of witching grace, When the

smile and tear of the young child year Dimple across its
“Spring”

Poet- Florence Price (1887-1953)

Range- E4-G5

Tessitura- E4- F#5

Vocal Difficulty- Intermediate

Text

“Spring”

There are promise and pleasure and hope in the spring,
That reckon, and reckon the future I know.
The bud and the bee, swaying low on the lea,
The dove cooing late
To his nesting mate
In a dream of ecstasy
There are laughter and magic and joy in the spring,
That capture, enrapture my heart I know.
A lilt on the breeze,
That is toss’d by the trees,
Which doth for me weave
Like a thrush at eve
A song of ecstasy.
Ah! There are madness and gladness and nothing of sadness,
That will me and thrill me and fill me I know
Life and its weal
Are to give and to feel the soul that can ache,
The heart that can break
With a pain of ecstasy.
“Spring” is one of two songs in this essay with text written by Florence Price. Price welcomes us into an enchanting world at springtime, complete with cooing birds, lovely trees and other displays of beauty and ecstasy. This piece is fast moving and requires particular attention to the delivery of consonants.

**Discussion of Text**

In this text, Price paints an enchanting picture of springtime including grassy meadowlands, bees, flowers, and singing birds. She speaks of “laughter and magic and joy in the spring” that captures the heart. In this text she reminds the reader that just as there is a rebirth of life and ecstasy in springtime, as well as “souls that can ache” and “hearts that can break,” as one endures life. Overall, the mood of the text is light, playful, and filled with rapture.

Price uses the following devices to bring that sentiment to life: alliteration, rhyming words and word painting. She uses alliteration in the following line of text: “the bud and the bee” swaying “low on the lea.” The repetition of the initial consonant sound allows the listener to create a visual picture as the words are sung, but also an audible picture that consists not only of sung pitches but the explosive sounds of consonants, for example.

The tool she uses most often is rhyming words pairs:

**Table 1. Rhyming Word Pairs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhyming Word Pairs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The bud and the <strong>bee</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaying low on the <strong>lea</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dove cooing <strong>late</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To his nesting <strong>mate</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lilt on the <strong>breeze</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That is toss’d by the <strong>trees</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which doth for me **weave**  
Life and its **weal**  
The soul that can **ache**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>weave</th>
<th>Like a thrush at eve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>weal</td>
<td>Are to give and to feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ache</td>
<td>The heart that can break</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Price uses repeated rhyming words within a single line:

“That **will** me and **fill** me and **thrill** me I know.”

Prices uses a variation of her existing rhyming device by using rhyming words whose final syllables are exactly the same but the first or second syllable contains the rhyming sound:

“That **capture**, en**rapture** my heart I know”

“There are **mad**ness and **glad**ness and nothing of **sad**ness”

The use of different rhyming styles in this text helps to highlight the meaning of words and maintains the playful spirit of the piece, akin to a nursery rhyme.

Lastly, at three points throughout the piece, Price speaks about ecstasy:

“A dream of ecstasy”

“A song of ecstasy”

“A pain of ecstasy”

Here, she invites the listener to consider the concept of ecstasy in three different ways.

The melody line for each expresses that invitation. The “dream” of ecstasy (Figure 4) is written with a simple melodic figure that ascends and descends comfortably. The “song” of ecstasy (Figure 5) features three sixteenth notes that must be sung quickly and precisely on the word “a,” almost like a vocalise. The pain of ecstasy (Figure 6) has a fermata on the first syllable of the word sung on the pitch F#5. This is also the highest pitch sung in the entire piece. The words “pain” and “of” start on a lower pitch and
ascend from the pain to the ecstasy. This seems to be the idea that Price hopes to portray:

Life has its challenges and its victories, but the happy mixture of heartbreak and joy is the pain of ecstasy that we all enjoy.

Figure 4. *Spring*, mm. 11-13

Figure 5. *Spring*, mm. 22-25
Florence Price provides language for the poetry in this song, “Spring,” that may not be familiar to the present day singer. She uses words like “weal,” “lea,” “thrush,” and “doth.” which are not commonly used in modern English language. The first step to understanding this poetry and delivering it effectively is to look up the definitions of antiquated and not commonly used words such and become familiar with the meaning. One should also consider a modern day synonym to keep in mind while singing the piece.

**Pedagogical considerations**

The challenge presented by this piece is that the text is very wordy and requires particular attention to consonants without interrupting the legato line and clarity of vowels. This text should be sung with the same attention to purity of vowels that is given to Italian texts. This is the only way that the text will be understood while moving along at a crisp allegretto tempo. The clear sound of the consonants, accompanied by the pure vowels is a part of the auditory landscape that Price seeks to paint in this piece. Auditory landscape is a term used to describe the entities in a piece such as piano accompaniment, melody, vowels, consonants, and the rests in between the words, that work together to add to the aural aesthetic of the piece. The consonants, for example, become a part of the
“noise” of springtime, such as birds chirping, the rustling of trees, and other sounds that makes the listener think of springtime. There are moments where the tempo relaxes with the use of ritardandi, to indicate a temporary settling of emotion, which also allows time to clearly articulate the text.

The other challenge with this piece is the overall high tessitura. Measure 15 for example (Figure 7), sits on the upper part of the staff and extends to G-5, which appropriately colors the second syllable of the words “laughter” and “magic.”

Figure 7. Spring, mm. 15-17

Performance Practice and Expression

The beauty of “Spring” lies in the constant “bounce” of energy. The 6/8 time signature is used to depict lightness and happiness. However, while it is important to provide emphasis on the first and fourth beats, as expected, it is equally important to sing the melody with an enduring legato. The singer should focus on creating an atmosphere of pure ecstasy. One of the tools the singers has at his or her disposal is the face. As suggested by the text, “there are madness and gladness and nothing of sadness,” there
should be no hint of sorrow in the face or demeanor of the singer during the performance of this piece.

**Accompaniment**

The most prevalent musical figure in this piece is outlined in the first two measures of the piano accompaniment (Figure 8). This figure appears throughout the piece exactly as it is initially written and in other variations. The *staccati* marked on the first and third beats are particularly important to observe because they set the proverbial “spring” in motion with the additional bounce. The most difficult part of creating the seamless ensemble for this piece is to observe the ever changing tempo markings and *fermati* while being careful to observe the original *allegretto* tempo marked at the beginning of the piece. If this is not accomplished, the piece will become progressively slower and lose the spritely and energetic spirit that is fundamental and necessary for this piece.

Figure 8. *Spring*, mm. 1-3
“Don’t You Tell Me No”
Poet- Florence Price (1887-1953)
Range- C4-Eb5
Tessitura- Bb4- Eb5
Vocal Difficulty- Beginner

Text
“Don’t You Tell Me No”

Always there’s something you cannot get
Maybe the girl that you have just met
Or some sweet baby whom you have lost
Before you stopped to count the cost.
There’s something I want now:
Oh mama, my mama,
Don’t you tell me “No”
‘Cause mama you see I’m yearning so
Oh mama, sweet mama,
My hands won’t behave.
For your dear charms they creep and crave
Don’t scold me,
Just hold me and fold me tight, oh tight!
Say, baby, I’ll lose my mind if you don’t treat me kind.
So mama, sweet mama honey to the bee
Is not as sweet as you to me.

This charming piece of music allows the singer to relax and enjoy the storytelling as much as the music making. Written by Florence Price in ordinary, everyday language, this piece delivers a relatable message of a lover trying to win the affections of a loved one.

Discussion of Text

The text of “Don’t You Tell Me No,” is more conversational and is likely one of the many popular songs that Price wrote. Certainly, Ms. Price is not speaking of her mother in this text. This poetry is from the perspective of a man to his lover, whom he lovingly refers to as “mama.” He admits that he just can’t keep his hands to himself and
begs her not to turn away his advances. The speaker in this text is relentless in his efforts to win over his lover. In this poetry, Price uses the vernacular of the people rather than formal language that is used in “Spring.”

**Pedagogical Considerations**

The most challenging aspect of this piece is to be able to strike a balance between the two stylistic worlds this piece represents: art song and popular song. However, this piece is still appropriate for beginners because of the simplicity of the melody, rhythm and poetic content. This piece straddles both genres and the vocal styling should match. This song should not be sung as a standard art song, but should present some of the vocal colorings that a popular song allows. More specifically, singers are encouraged to minimize the vibrato, reflecting a more pop than operatic sound. The voice should be allowed to spin freely at all times. Singers are encouraged to use their chest voice or chest voice dominant mix when singing all notes below the staff. Notes on the bottom half of the staff (F4-A4), should be sung with a head voice dominant mix and notes above that should be completely in the head voice. The vocal approach might most closely resemble the one used in singing Golden Age Broadway standards with one additional consideration. The influence of ragtime and the cakewalk are implied in the piano accompaniment and should therefore affect the vocal line. “The cakewalk originated earlier among American black slaves who, often in the presence of their masters, used the dance as a subtle satire on the elegance of white ballroom dances. It contributed to the evolution of subsequent American and European dances based on jazz rhythms, and its music influenced the growth of ragtime.”

49 Concrete examples of this would include,

small scoops upward to a pitch and short glissandi down to a pitch, for emphasis of text only. This should only be done sparingly in order to maintain a balance between styles. Teachers should encourage students to make these adjustments to their classical vocal technique without compromising healthy vocal production and beautiful sound.

**Performance Practice and Expression**

Storytelling and direct communication with the audience are very important factors to the effective performance of the piece. The mood of this piece is light, fun, and mockingly endearing as the singer begs not to be rejected. Of primary importance, is the ability to make individual choices about which words to emphasize in order to convey the meaning of the text and ultimately to share the story of a person who is trying to win over a lover. The words “oh mama,” “my momma,” and “sweet momma” are repeated throughout. They should be colored differently because this is the text that Price uses to plead with the lover. While Price doesn’t mark in accent marks, *sustenutos, glissandi* or louder dynamic markings on those words, the music naturally leads the singer to make some of these choices. The first time the refrain is sung, it is marked *mezzo piano*. The repeat of the refrain is marked *forte*. This is another invitation to create different vocal colors, always keeping in mind that the speaker in the text is trying to win someone over. The singer could also choose to alter their physical posture a bit so that it is open and almost bent toward the audience. Another choice would be to slump the shoulders in a position of pity and humility.

**Accompaniment**

The piano accompaniment is much more accessible to a novice or amateur musician, whereas a piece like “Spring,” would require the employment of a trained
pianist. The cheerful mood found in the piano accompaniment reminds us that this piece is very playful rather than sorrowful because of the apparent rejection or hesitation of the lover. The piano accompaniment consists of mostly block chords in the right hand with a bass clef part that features mostly a single note bass line, sometimes using octaves, and at other times using simple block chords. The overall essence of this piece is reminiscent of the cakewalk genre of music that was created by slaves.

“My Little Dreams”

Poet- Georgia Douglas Johnson (1880-1966)
Range- Eb4-Eb5
Tessitura- Bb4- Eb5
Vocal Difficulty- Intermediate

Text

“My Little Dreams”

I’m folding up my little dreams within my heart tonight,
And praying I may soon forget the torture of their sight.
For Time’s deft fingers scroll my brow with fell relentless art-
I’m folding up my little dreams tonight within my heart.

Dreams are not always beautiful and time does not always heal. This agonizingly beautiful melody and the matching accompaniment are memorable and create a tranquilizing atmosphere that lifts the listener away from the harsh reality in the text.

Georgia Douglas Johnson- Biographical Information

Georgia Douglas Johnson was born to mixed race parents in Atlanta, Georgia in 1880. She was a prominent writer during the Harlem Renaissance. In her book, African American Poets: Lives, Works, and Sources, Joyce Pettis states that “Johnson has been primarily relegated to minor status, though her work occupies an important place in the
progress of the African American literature.”\textsuperscript{50} In fact, Georgia Douglas Johnson’s home in Washington D.C. was a “beloved meeting place for writing friends including Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Jessie Fauset, and Alain Lock, The Dean of the Harlem Renaissance”\textsuperscript{51} They would meet for so-called “Saturday Soirees” at the Johnson home where these literary minds could share their writings. She “provided a connection for Washington and Harlem figures.”\textsuperscript{52} Although Johnson’s texts are not political, she does often address racial inequality as well as topics like nature, love, and romantic feelings.

“Johnson's life illustrates the difficulties faced by African American women writers in the first half of the century.”\textsuperscript{53} She is a graduate of Atlanta University (1896), where she met her husband, Henry Lincoln Johnson. She published her first poem in 1916 at the age of 36. “She remained geographically removed from the major literary circles of her day, which were in Harlem, due to her marriage to a Washington lawyer and civil employee.”\textsuperscript{54} Her husband, who expected her to stay home and care for their family died in 1925. She was forty-five years old and suddenly financially responsible for her two boys. She found a job and initiated the Saturday meetings so that she would be in a supportive environment. She found temporary jobs as a substitute public school teacher and a file clerk. She also worked for the Department of Labor but the pay was very low.

\textsuperscript{51} Owens, 173-176.
\textsuperscript{52} Owens, 173-176.
\textsuperscript{54} Honey.
During the late 1920s, she traveled giving lectures and readings. Dr. Maureen Honey provides further insight about Johnson's publications:

“Through the pioneering work of Gloria Hull, we now know that Johnson wrote a substantial number of plays during the 1920s, including Plumes, which won first prize in a contest run by Opportunity in 1927, and Blue Blood, performed by the Krigwa Players in New York City during the fall of 1926 and published the following year. Twenty-eight dramas are listed in the Catalogue of Writings that Johnson compiled in 1962–1963, but only a handful have been recovered. She also listed a book-length manuscript about her literary salon, a collection of short stories, and a novel, which were lost as well. Of thirty-one short stories listed in her catalog, only three have been located, under the pseudonym of Paul Tremaine (two of these were published in Dorothy West’s journal Challenge in 1936 and 1937). Probably much of this material was thrown away by workers clearing out Johnson's house when she died in 1966.”

When she lost her job at the Department of Labor, she was forced to write less and had to be supported by her son who was a lawyer. She applied for fellowships, but all were denied. Even though she endured great financial hardship during her lifetime, she continued to help others. “She called her home “Half-Way House” to represent her willingness to provide shelter to those in need, including, at one point, Zora Neale Hurston.”

Discussion of Text

Georgia Douglas Johnson uses the title, “My Little Dreams,” and the opening line, “I’m folding up my little dreams within my heart tonight,” as a stark contrast to the mood introduced in the next line: “And praying I may soon forget, the torture of their sight.” It is interesting that Johnson refers to her little dreams as “torture,” portraying the dreams as unbearable and more like a nightmare. The text continues to lament the passing of time, which begins to show on the speaker’s furrowed brow. The text lies in

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55 Honey.
56 Honey.
57 Honey.
juxtaposition to the delicately shaped melodic line that Ms. Price has written, leaving us feeling sorry for the speaker.

**Pedagogical Considerations**

This piece is marked as intermediate primarily because of issues with breath support and control needed to sing longer phrases. The piece appears to be deceivingly simple. In actuality, the two opening phrases, “I’m folding up my little dreams within my heart tonight,” and “and praying I may soon forget the torture of their sight,” can be particularly difficult to shape and deliver without running out of breath for a young singer. The singer should imagine a surge of breath or energy through longer notes like the dotted quarter note in particular, so that the phrase remains buoyant and doesn’t fall flat at the end. The singer should also use the full color of the voice rather than trying to make the vocal approach tender because of the lullaby mood. The crescendo mark that begins on measure 13 (Figure 9) would be best executed by opening the vowel of the word “art” to a pure “ah” vowel, leaving the r-color until the very last moment as not to diminish the *mezzo forte* by closing off the vowel.
Performance Practice and Expression

Finding an *andante* tempo at the beginning of the piece that works for the singer is of paramount importance, especially when considering the issues with breath support mentioned above. It is also important to establish the *andante* tempo so that the *poco ritardandi* and *a tempo* marked throughout have a clear point of return. Every changing dynamic marking and tempo marking is important because it portrays the anguish of the speaker who is struggling to forget his or her “little dream.”
Accompaniment

The vocal line is doubled in the right hand of the piano accompaniment throughout (Figure 10). The pianist and the singer will have to ensure that the ensemble is in sync while not being rigid. This piece uses this repeated motif in different variations throughout the piece in the left hand:

Figure 10. *My Little Dreams*, bass clef only mm. 1-3

This is the motif that is reminiscent of the Brahms’s *Weigenlied* (Figure 11) in that it provides the same rocking, peaceful atmosphere associated with lullabies.

Figure 11. Brahms’s *Weigenlied*, mm.1-5
“Lethe”
Poet- Georgia Douglas Johnson
Range- D4-E5
Tessitura- D4-C5
Vocal Difficulty- Beginner
Text
“Lethe”
I do not ask for love, ah! No,
For friendship’s happiness
These were relinquished long ago
I search for something less.
I seek a little tranquil bark
In which to drift at east a while
And then quite silently to sink in quiet seas.

Constantly changing tempi and dynamic markings are the tools Price uses in this song to express the inner turmoil and depression that the speaker is experiencing. Enjoy partnering with the pianist to seamlessly deliver each change.

Discussion of Text

The text of “Lethe” is intriguing. The word “lethe” refers to a river in Hades whose water causes drinkers to forget their past.58 “Lethe” which means forgetfulness or concealment, was also a Greek spirit of forgetfulness and oblivion, with whom the river was often identified.59 In this text, Johnson paints the picture of a person who has given up on love and the happiness of friendship. The speaker searches for “something less”: to drift away and sink into the sea.

Pedagogical Considerations

This piece presents a wonderful opportunity for a high voice to work on the middle to low part of the voice. A medium voice would find the piece to be quite

58 Meriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “Lethe.”
59 Meriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “Lethe.”
comfortable in terms of range and tessitura. In thinking about teaching this piece to higher voices, encourage students to maintain a consistent vibrato and to remain in the head voice as often as safely possible. Overall, this piece is simple, with the setting being mostly syllabic. This piece should not present a challenge to most singers and is accessible for beginners.

**Performance Practice and Expression**

Although the text is a bit dark and morbid, by providing a melody line with definite peaks and valleys, Price suggests that hopelessness is not a one-dimensional emotion but rather a mixture of several often conflicting emotions. The dynamic markings also build up to a climax before relaxing into the triple pianissimo, which marks the final pitch of the song. The speaker’s wish to “silently sink in quiet seas” is depicted most exquisitely with a final pitch that decrescendos to nothing. The shifting tempo markings paint a similar picture of confusing and shifting emotions that lie beneath text that suggests that the speaker’s mind is made up. The last page of the music is marked *ritardando* and then *a tempo* with the changes happening every other measure and often within a single measure, a further display of shifting emotions and perhaps, regret. The challenge in this piece is to create a unified ensemble with the pianist without the delivery becoming too measured, calculated, or robotic. It has to sound like the feelings and emotions are felt as they are delivered, almost spontaneously.

**Accompaniment**

The accompaniment is very supportive. While the melody line is not always doubled by the accompaniment, the singer’s pitch is often found in the chord played by the pianist.
“Interim”

Poet- Virginia Houston

Range- B3-E5

Tessitura- E4-E5

Vocal Difficulty- Intermediate

Text

“Interim”
I am so tired waiting for my heart to break
Waiting for tears to heal my soul
For a blessed hand to melt away the agony within me
Aeons since you went from me into an alien world.
And still stranger to beauty are all my days;
My nights, dark musings of libations
Where once the myrtle grew
I could carry the weight of winter,
The glory of autumn nights and days;
But oh! I cannot bear the spring.
And I am ill unto death my beloved,
Sick with longing,
Sick with weeping,
Waiting for my heart to break!

“Interim” displays the height of the angst and drama experienced when one is waiting for their heart to break. And what a curious position to be in: not in the midst of heartbreak, but standing in anticipation of heartbreak. The piano accompaniment is the driving force through every climactic peak and depressed valley.

Virginia Houston- Biographical Information

The poet for Price’s “Interim,” Virginia Houston, is a bit of a mystery. There is a distinct lack of biographical information available about her except the brief head note that appears in Beatrice M. Murphy’s “Negro Voices” (1938) which reads: “Virginia Houston lives in Cleveland, Ohio, where she worked with a social agency and is now connected with the social service end of the City Police Force. Her poems have been
widely published and highly praised.” Her poems are included in Maureen Honey’s anthology of Women’s Poetry in the Harlem Renaissance, and Beatrice M. Murphy’s “Negro Voices.” Her poems also appeared regularly in “The Crisis and Opportunity,” the official magazine for the NAACP, edited by W. E. B. Du Bois. Maureen Honey states that “Houston’s poetry is unusually critical of the black figures she describes in ‘Dark Cleveland’ and ‘Troubadour.’ Interesting for its candor in this respect and for its technical sophistication, Houston’s sensibility suggests a keen intelligence wedded to a sensitive reflective lens.” A note about her use of overly erotic images is included in Lynn Dumenil’s “The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s.” “And while they rejected primitive imagery, some women—like poets Angelina Weld Grimke, Mae V. Cowdery, and Virginia Houston—often employed overly erotic imagery, in which they portrayed their sexuality in their own terms, not those of white patrons or white colleagues.”

Discussion of Text

Miriam-Webster’s dictionary defines the word “interim” as “an intervening time.” The speaker in this text spends his or her time waiting for their heart to break. The anguish of waiting is so strong that it makes the speaker “ill unto death.” The speaker expresses that their lover left “aeons” ago into an “alien world.” His or her nights are filled with “dark musings of libations where once the myrtle grew.” A myrtle shrub has

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60 Honey, 149.
61 Honey, 149.
63 Honey, 149.
evergreen leaves and is a symbol of love.\textsuperscript{66} This reference to myrtle is a reminder that the speaker’s love should have lasted forever just as the evergreen remains green continually. However, the myrtle no longer grows. The place where the myrtle once grew becomes the location where the speaker pours out wine or another liquid in honor of a deity,\textsuperscript{67} hoping to restore his love by paying homage to a higher power. The text goes on to describe the speaker’s disdain for spring. Spring is a reminder of new beginnings, and thus a bitter reminder of happier times. The speaker is “sick with longing” because with each passing moment, the depth of his agony grows as he waits for his heart to completely break.

\textbf{Pedagogical Considerations}

The first measure of the vocal line is sung \textit{a capella}, so it will be important for the singer to be particularly precise with intonation (Figure 12). This measure is a clear musical depiction of being alone. The word “break” at the end of the piece (measure 73) should be sung on a neutral vowel, leaving the diphthong until the very end so that the voice can resonate without being impeded by a vowel that is too closed (Figure 13).

\textbf{Figure 12.} \textit{Interim}, mm.1-6

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure12.png}
\end{center}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{66} Dictionary.com, s.v., “Myrtle.”
\textsuperscript{67} Dictionary.com s.v., “Libations.”
\end{footnotesize}
Performance Practice and Expression

Florence Price uses the shifting tempo markings and dynamic markings to express the turmoil that the speaker is feeling. The singer is charged with leading these changes effectively and can use each one as an opportunity to show another layer of emotional instability on his or her face and body. The shifting time signatures and dynamic markings are the primary reasons why this piece is marked as intermediate. The shift from 2/4 time signature in the beginning of the piece to 6/8 time signature in measures 49 through 72 is an indication that a different vocal coloring should be used as well. The 2/4 section is filled with cries of torment and frustration whereas the 6/8 section is where the speaker begins to carefully evaluate how much more sorrow he can bear.

Accompaniment

The first four measures are very dramatic. Here, Price employs the familiar groups of fast moving 16\textsuperscript{th} notes that price often employs, but this time they are played in octaves (Figure 12). The dramatic piano introduction, followed by an exposed vocal line with no accompaniment, reveals the extreme emotional turmoil followed by an acknowledgement that the speaker has been abandoned. This same figure appears again
in measure 45, signaling that the speaker’s plight is unaffected (Figure 14). Price illustrates the emotional distress and isolation with a rich, chromatic melody, rarely doubled in the accompaniment. She masterfully shapes the groups of 16th notes used from measure 59 to 72 to also highlight the chaotic brew of emotions felt by the singer (Figures 15-16). Some of those groupings do not begin on the downbeat of each measure, another showing of instability. The pianist provides the pulse of the piece by making sure these passages are played in time until the tempo speeds up at measure 68 with the accelerando.

Figure 14. Interim, mm. 44-48

Figure 15. Interim, mm. 57-59
Figure 16. *Interim*, mm. 60-71
“Thou’rt My Lov’d One”

Poet- Unknown
Range- B3-G#5
Tessitura- G#4-E5
Vocal Difficulty- Intermediate

Text
The stars that shine above thee
The moon that swingeth low
And all the winds that love thee
The stream that singeth slow
They know that thou’rt my lov’d one
And bring me dreams of thee
The crimson poppies stain thy lips,
The rose gives thee perfume
Among the tendrils of thy hair
The night her charm doth twine
And from a bough the mocking bird doth sing in ecstasy
Ah were his song but mine

This song is the only piece analyzed in this essay that is set for chamber ensemble including violin, cello, and piano. The tantalizing melody line is further enhanced by this particular grouping of instruments.

Discussion of Text

This text paints a glorious picture of “the stars that shine above,” “the moon that swingeth low,” “the winds that love,” and “the stream that singeth slow.” The poet gives each of these entities an action, then declares that all of these facets of nature “know” (another action) that “thou’rt my lov’d one” and “bring” dreams of that loved one. In essence, this poem indicates that all of nature testifies of his or her love, and every time the speaker sees these elements in nature, he is reminded of his or her beloved. The crimson poppies, the rose, and the night all act as a backdrop for the face of his lover or add to the beauty of his lover by coloring her lips or making her smell like perfume.
Lastly, the speaker makes mention of a mockingbird singing in ecstasy. Mockingbirds often mimic the sound of other creatures and continue to add to their repertoire of songs throughout their lives.68 “Although all adult male mockingbirds sing during the day, only a bachelor sings at night.” This is why the speaker longs to have the mockingbird’s song, they are both bachelors wistfully singing romantic songs.69

**Pedagogical Considerations**

Consider using a lighter approach when singing the low B’s (B3) written on measures 10 and 27 (Figures 17-18) by not singing them with too much weight. A head voice dominant mix would be most appropriate and would assist the singer in maintaining an uninterrupted legato line. Overall, this piece has short phrases, which allow plenty of time to breathe. The A#4 sung on measure 21 needs to be perfectly in tune in order for the melody line to match the chords played by the piano, violin, and cello Figure 19). This pitch is written on the words “stain thy” in order to emphasize the stain that the crimson poppies leave on the lover’s lips, which brings satisfaction to the speaker. Intonation may become an issue for less experienced singers in this section.

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69 Porter.
Figure 17. *Thou’rt My Loved One*, mm. 9-13

Figure 18. *Thou’rt My Loved One*, mm. 27-30
Performance Practice and Expression

Unlike the other pieces, this song is accompanied by piano, cello, and violin. Each of these instruments become equal partners as accompanying instruments with the voice always at the forefront of the ensemble. After the line “And from a bough the mockingbird doth sing in ecstasy,” the vocal line becomes the song of the bird as the singer articulates the word, “Ah.” As the final line “were his song but mine,” is sung, the violin becomes the bird when it echoes the triplet figure found in the vocal line two times. Here is an opportunity to embody the freedom and carefree nature of a bird by not singing the “Ah” in strict time. The fermata written on top of the sustained block chord in the piano part is an opportunity for the singer to enjoy the song of the bird (Figure 20). However, be careful to arrive at the second beat in time with the cello and violin. Feel free to take a breath, as indicated by the breath mark after the word “ah,” and sing the final line of the phrase with the indicated tempi, \textit{(poco ritardando, a tempo and poco}...
accelerando) led by the pianist. The singer may lead the fermata marked at measure 34 and bring the ensemble back to tempo by singing the first beat of measure 35 in the original tempo and starting the ritardando on the second beat, as indicated (Figure 21).

Figure 20. Thou’rt My Loved One, mm. 31-34
Accompaniment

Price’s setting of this text is unique because no other song presented in this research is accompanied by a small chamber group consisting of a violin, cello, and piano. The piano accompaniment provides florid grouping of 16th notes while the stringed instruments sustain and provide a lovely harmonic foundation for the ensemble. The sustained writing for strings including longer note values (half notes, dotted half notes), slurs, and tied notes also help to further highlight the enduring love of the speaker. Price doesn’t use this particular grouping of accompanying instruments in any of the other art songs in this group, but she employs them here in order to create a more active cushion of ecstasy for the vocal line to rise above. Because of the lower tessitura of the vocal line, the instrumental ensemble must be careful not to drown out the vocal line and should consider playing one dynamic level softer, depending on the size of the singer’s voice.
Measure 28, for example is already marked one dynamic marking lower than the voice in
the piano part and the strings (Figure 18).

“Debts”

Poet- Jessie B. Rittenhouse (1869-1948)

Range- Bb3-F5

Tessitura- Bb4-Eb5

Vocal Difficulty- Advanced

Text

“Debts”

My debt to you Beloved is one I cannot pay
In any coin
in any coin of any realm on any reckoning day
I cannot pay
In any realm on any reckoning day
I cannot pay
I cannot pay
For where is he shall figure the debt
When all is said
To one who makes you dream, dream
When all the dreams were dead.
Or where is the appraiser
Who shall the claim compute of one who makes you sing
Makes you sing
Sing again,
Again,
When all the songs were mute, mute.

“Debts” is certainly the most difficult song presented in this essay. The shifting
key signatures, time signatures, dynamics, and tempi would prove a challenge for even
the most advanced singer.

Jessie Rittenhouse- Biographical Information

Jessie Rittenhouse was born in Mount Morris, New York and graduated from
Genesee Wesleyan Seminary. She was a critic, lecturer, and advocate for modern poetry.

According to the Poetry Foundation, she “edited many anthologies that brought
contemporary poets such as Robert Frost, Sara Teasdale, and Edna St. Vincent Millay to a wide readership, including ‘The Younger American Poets’ and ‘The Little Book of Modern American Verse.’ After she moved to Winter Park, Florida in 1924 with her husband, the poet Clinton Scollard, she founded the Poetry Society of Florida in order to “encourage younger poets.” She taught poetry classes at Rollins College and was awarded an honorary doctor of literature degree in 1928 from Rollins College.  

Discussion of Text

In essence, the speaker realizes that he cannot repay his debt to his beloved because the currency to pay back this person does not exist. He is indebted to this person because they helped him to “dream when all the dreams were dead” and “sing when all the songs were mute.” This person gave him hope in the midst of darkness. There is no “coin” that could be used to repay a person who has saved your life. The rest of the text reiterates that this debt cannot be paid.

Pedagogical considerations

The shifting tonalities and key signatures present a challenge for those who have issues with intonation. Make sure the voice is well supported with breath in order to sing in tune. The melody line is not easy to sing because of the chromatic, conjunct, and disjunct intervals. The melody is not very memorable or catchy largely because it does not follow a predictable pattern and does not repeat. The advanced singer should consider spending quality time accurately singing this piece with a metronome before attempting to navigate the changing tempi.

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**Performance Practice and Expression**

Florence Price uses shifting tonality to express the emotion and meaning of the text in “Debts.” In this way, “Debts” is a bit of a departure from what we normally hear from Florence Price. She changes key four times in this piece, more than any other song discussed in this paper. The piece starts in E flat major, then moves to G major, back to E flat major, then to B major, and finally we land back in E flat major. Here, Price uses the shifting key signatures to angst of the speaker who is disturbed because he cannot figure out how to repay his debt. A sense of continuity is felt because of the consistent return to E flat major after each change in key signature. The key change to B major is the one that stands out and sparks curiosity the most. In particular, the section that moves from E flat to B major uses the following text: “Of one who makes you sing, makes you sing, sing again, again.” The music in the B major section is cheerful and the accompaniment is light-hearted, using bouncing *staccati* throughout and a faster tempo (*allegretto*). This section should be sung with the same exuberance and joy that is outlined in the piano accompaniment and that is felt when one is singing. In addition, the vocal line rises with passion each time the speaker says, “makes you sing.” Here, Price focuses on the joy that is felt by the singer as he or she thinks about the one who could make them sing “when all the songs were mute.” This piece is unusual when compared to the other songs examined in this paper.

**Accompaniment**

The piano accompaniment is not at all supportive. Very rarely is the vocal line doubled in the piano part, however, the pitch for the singer can be found hidden within the very colorful chords in this piece. The pianist is equally responsible with the singer
for creating an atmosphere of continuity in spite of the constantly changing time

signatures, key signatures, dynamics, tempi, and articulation markings.

“I Remember”

Poet- Louise Charlotte Wallace

Range- C4-F5

Tessitura- A4-E5

Vocal Difficulty- Intermediate

Text

“I Remember”

Never shall the sun pour light on a yellow flow’r
But I see thy hair!

Never again September’s sky
But the blue of thine eyes returning;

Never, never the surging warmth of the fire
Here on my hearthstone burning,
But I remember thee
I remember thee and my desire!

   In this piece Price creates a complete emotional and musical journey within just a

few short measures. It is reflective and nostalgic in nature. The piano accompaniment is

an equal partner in the storytelling.

Louise Charlotte Wallace- Biographical information

   “I Remember” and “The Crescent Moon” both feature the text of Louise Charlotte

Wallace. Unfortunately, there is currently no information available about her.

Discussion of Text

   The speaker’s memory of sunlight, the September’s sky and the warmth of the fire

may fade, but the sight of his lover’s hair and her blue eyes will never fade from his

memory. These are all memorable facets of nature. However the speaker declares that he

would forget these characteristics before forgetting his love and equally important, his
desire for that lover as intimated in the final phrase of the piece. The word “never” is repeated four times, signifying how deep his resolve is to always remember.

**Pedagogical Considerations**

Be sure that the notes in the vocal line that sit below the staff and on the lower part of the staff do not become pressed or squeezed in order to be heard. For example, in measure 8 there is a C4 in the vocal line. This is the lowest note in the piece and it only occurs one time. It is important that this note is sung as a part of a continuing phrase, maintaining the same vocal color as the rest of the phrase, even though it is much lower (Figure 22).

Figure 22. *I Remember*, mm. 8-11

The second syllable of the repeated word “never” should be sung using rounded lips and the schwa [ə] simultaneously, avoiding the American r-colored vowel as much as possible. One should also sing this word with the stress on the first syllable even when the interval goes from a lower note in the first syllable to a higher note in the second syllable (Figure 23).
Performance Practice and Expression

Although Florence Price was always very specific about dynamics and tempi in her songs, “I Remember” highlights her desire to achieve a particular result by providing detailed markings for the singer and pianist. All of these changes in volume and speed are reflections of the inner agitation of the speaker as he struggles to remember. Measures 8 through 11 (just four measures) for example, are marked piano, mezzo forte, crescendo, and forte, in terms of volume (Figure 22). Then in terms of speed, Price marks poco ritardando and a tempo in the same measure. Measures 17 through 22 are marked with poco meno mosso, ritardando, a tempo and poco accelerando, along with piano, mezzo piano, mezzo forte, crescendo, fortissimo and caloroso (Figure 23).
Accompaniment

There is an obvious challenge for both the singer and the pianist, to deliver each of the markings mentioned above with beauty, as if they were innate instincts rather than sounding like one is just completing the instructions provided. This is a challenge that we are always seeking to overcome as singers, but in this particular piece, it is even more difficult just because of the sheer number of instructions Price has given. Allow the markings to direct the shape of the piece rather than become a musical constraint.
Three Short Songs

I. Day Dawns

II. The Crescent Moon

III. The Broken Bowl

I. Day Dawns

Poet- Angelina Grimké

Range-Db4-D5

Tessitura-Db4-D5

Vocal Difficulty- Intermediate

Text

“Day Dawns”

Day dawns limpid, cold and still
An amber liquid in an azure chalice
A carven frieze
Of shadow’d trees adorning

These three short songs are like musical vignettes, describing dawn (represented by the amber liquid in an azure chalice), love (represented by the crescent moon and the start), and utter dismay about the fragility of the soul (represented by the broken bowl). These songs would be best performed as a complete set, rather than as individual offerings.

Discussion of Text

Angelina Grimké provides us with a hued description of dawn. The amber liquid represents the sun, slowly appearing in the blue sky (the “azure chalice). The sight of trees that haven’t yet captured the sun’s light is likened unto a “carven frieze of shadowed trees” adorning this lovely picture of dawn.
**Pedagogical Considerations**

Don’t allow the breath to become stagnant during longer note values. Keep the breath vibrant and energetic so that the phrases don’t die away.

**Performance Practice and Expression**

Try to follow the common practice of putting more emphasis on stressed syllables even if the melody line is written in a way that goes against normal word stress. For example, in measure 4 (Figure 24), the second syllable of the word “limpid” is written on a higher pitch, which would make it tempting to get louder on that syllable. However, the second syllable should still be de-emphasized.

**Accompaniment**

The accompaniment uses very dense chords in the first five measures that could make intonation an issue for the singer. However, for the rest of the piece, the vocal line is doubled in the top voice of the piano accompaniment, or the pitch can be found somewhere within the chord (Figure 24). The intervals are hard to hear, the chord clusters make it easy for intonation to become an issue for the first 11 measures. The use of colorful, dense chords that relax into tonal harmonies reflect the changes observed as night turns into day. From measure 12 onward, the harmony relaxes into more tonal chord progressions, which are much easier to sing (Figure 25). Perhaps Florence Price desires to give the piece a tonal closure as the poetic idea comes to a close with the words “of shadowed trees adorning” and the dawn of a new day begins. In this piece, Florence Price mirrors the text with the harmony and melodic line.
II. The Crescent Moon

Poet- Louise Charlotte Wallace

Range- F4-F5

Tessitura- F4-Db5

Vocal Difficulty- Intermediate

Text

“The Crescent Moon”

I saw the crescent moon,
One silver star beside.
“The moon’s my love”
I made lament
“Would God I were her star!”
Discussion of Text

There is a silver star that sits beside the moon. This moon represents the speaker’s lover. The star represents the speaker. He longs to be near his majestic lover (the moon) even if he is just a silver star in the vast sky. The moon is such a large celestial being when compared to a star. Choosing to use the moon as the symbol for his lover indicates how incredible and magnificent he feels his lover is compared to him, a tiny star. The speaker makes no mention of any other bodies in the night sky revealing that in his passionate desire for his lover, he sees nothing but the bright light of his moon.

Pedagogical Considerations

The piano accompaniment begins at mezzo forte with a thick texture of rapidly moving 16th notes in the right hand and eighth notes in the left hand. Fight the urge to push the voice in order to be heard above the piano accompaniment. Instead, allow the vowels in the words adequate space to resonate so that the words can be heard. Don’t allow the word “God” in measure 8 to become trapped in the throat, but rather make sure the sound is forward and closer to the front of the face by singing the word with a clear [aw] or [ɔ] vowel. Allow the throat to relax in a neutral, open position.

Performance Practice and Expression

“The Crescent Moon is the second song in Price’s set entitled “Three Short Songs.” It is easier to conceptualize this piece as a member of a group of songs because it so short. It is the second song in the set, right after, “Day Dawns,” and acts almost as a palette cleanser from the very complex harmonies in the piece that precedes it. The singer should create a map of the very brief emotional journey of universal love that this song makes. This map would assign each phrase or two as a different point on the emotional
journey. The first two lines are the basic narrative, explaining what the speaker saw. The declaration of love, “would God I were her star” is the emotional climax of the piece. The piano part that follows the final declaration is the fall of the emotional climax. The accent marked on the word “God” in measure 8 further cements the climax, along with the sforzando marked on the word “star” in measure 10 (Figure 26).

Figure 26. The Crescent Moon, mm. 9-11

Accompaniment

In “The Crescent Moon,” Price employs her usual tools: a beautiful, sweeping melody line floating on a solid foundation of repeated sixteenth notes at rapid allegro con brio (fast tempo with brilliance/spirit) tempo. The vocal line is the pulse that keeps the ensemble together. Each syllable of the text falls on a strong beat in 12/8 time signature (beats 1, 4, 7, and 10) This position of power will allow the vocal line to remain in control of the tempo (Figure 27).
III. The Broken Bowl

Poet- Wesley Custright

Range- E4-A5

Tessitura- E4-E5

Vocal Difficulty- Intermediate

Text

“The Broken Bowl”

The bowl is crack’d
The fragile glass is broken
And the milk
And the milk of the soul is wasted
Is wasted away

Wesley Custright-Biographical information

There is no information about the life of this poet, Wesley Custright.

Discussion of Text

The bowl represents life. The milk of the soul is the essence of existing human beings. This piece laments that life itself is broken, and our souls are wasting away.

Pedagogical Considerations

This melody line is simple, using mostly quarter notes, half notes, and conjunct intervals. It is not until the repeated word “wasted” that a challenge is presented. The
high A must be sustained on a modified open vowel for the climax of the piece at
measure 16. It will be tempting to shove all of the air into the first beat of this pitch
marked *fortissimo*. Instead, manage the air throughout all 8 beats while being careful to
reserve enough air to sing the second syllable of the word on E4.

**Performance Practice and Expression**

The last song in this set entitled “Three Short Songs” is “The Broken Bowl.” The
accompaniment follows a simple pattern (Figure 28). It is not until the 17th measure while
the singer holds the high A that the pattern changes to a series of chords on eighth notes
(Figure 30). This sudden change from the monotonous pattern allows us to better
experience the surge of emotion and despair that is felt because the “milk of the soul” is
wasted away. After that, the initial pattern is heard again. This helps to portray the utter
brokenness and hopelessness of the speaker who declares that the “milk of the soul” is
wasted.

**Accompaniment**

The accompaniment is rather simple, but Price uses this repeated motif to create a
somber, unchanging mood. Quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, eighth, eighth quarter repeats
throughout the piece (Figure 28). The rhythmic pattern is similar to the one found in the
piano accompaniment of Schubert’s *Der Tod Das Mädchen* (Figure 29).
Figure 28. The Broken Bowl, mm. 1-7

Figure 29. Schubert’s Der Tod Das Mädchen mm. 25-32
Conclusion

The art songs of Florence Price represent a segment of art song literature that is widely underrepresented and prodigiously overlooked: African American art song. By studying and performing Price’s songs, the arts community receives dual benefits in that it initiates what would hopefully become a deep curiosity regarding the classical works of other African Americans and of women. Areas of further research would include the art songs of Florence Price with text by male poets as well as the popular songs of Florence Price. This body of music literature is quite vast. One should also consider examining the Price scores in the Marian Anderson Collection.

All in all, the reality is that although Florence Price died in 1953, a true appreciation for her music on a national scale is only now becoming a reality. There are many other unsung compositions by African American men and women that should be
explored, lest the study of American Art song continue to be incomplete and reflective only of the white, male majority in America.
## Appendix

### Table of Songs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Songs</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Level of Difficulty</th>
<th>Additional Notes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day Dawns</td>
<td>Db4-D5</td>
<td>Andante</td>
<td>Emotionless and beautiful dawn of a new day</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Colorful chord clusters in piano accompaniment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debts</td>
<td>Bb3-F5</td>
<td>Andante</td>
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<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Tricky time signatures, intervals, and key changes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Popular song</td>
</tr>
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<td>Andante</td>
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<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Constantly changing dynamics and tempi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim</td>
<td>B3-E5</td>
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<td>Overwhelming pain</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Requires strong middle voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lethe</td>
<td>D4-E5</td>
<td>Andantino</td>
<td>Hopelessness</td>
<td>Beginner</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Little Dreams</td>
<td>Eb4-Eb5</td>
<td>Andante</td>
<td>Agonizing dreams</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Longer phrase lengths</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>E4-G5</td>
<td>Allegretto</td>
<td>Lilting and joyful</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Text articulation is challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>Mood</td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Broken Bowl</td>
<td>E4-A5</td>
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<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Optional high A5. Can sing E5 instead</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Crescent Moon</td>
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<td>Passionate love</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>May be difficult for inexperienced pianist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thou’rt My Loved One</td>
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<td>Andantino</td>
<td>Nature testifies of love</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Set for chamber group</td>
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Bibliography


Special Collections Department University of Arkansas. "Florence Beatrice Smith Price Papers Addendum (MC 988a)." Fayetteville, Arkansas, 2018.


