

The Musical Artistry of Florence Price: Hidden Figure No More

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The total compositional output of Florence Price was over 300 works, including a virtuoso piano sonata, character pieces, 2 piano quintets, three piano concerti, 20 orchestral works, and over 100 art songs and arrangements of spirituals. Price's music reflects American musical nationalism of the early 20th century. She was a pioneer in using elements of African-American music (Negro spirituals, plantation dance rhythms, blues, gospel) in symphonic music as well as achieving notable firsts as a woman composer. The Florence Price Archives are at the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville at Mullins Library in Special Collections, boxes of correspondence, musical scores in manuscript, and other materials available for perusal by scholars. The Helen Walker-Hill Collection, music by black women composers, at the University of Colorado – Boulder, includes 63 scores by Florence Price. The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts and Letters at Yale University contains a manuscript for Price's 3rd symphony.

Florence Price: Piano Repertoire

Published Scores, solo

William Grant Still Music – The Florence Price Collection, facsimile <https://goo.gl/jcRWpv>

Hildegard Press – Black Women Composers: A Century of Piano Music (1893 – 1990), a single piece by Price, in the anthology <https://goo.gl/9X6Qh7>

G. Schirmer - Piano Sonata in E Minor, edited by Dr. Rae Linda Brown

Oxford University Press – single pieces by Price contained in 2 volumes, anthology edited by Dr. William Chapman Nyaho <https://goo.gl/5kBVRR>

Piano Music of Africa and the African Diaspora, vol. 2

Piano Music of Africa and the African Diaspora, vol. 3

ClarNan Editions – 3 volumes of character pieces by Price, edited by Dr. Barbara Garvey Jackson
<https://bit.ly/2VA4yPR>

Three Suites for Piano (CN100)

An Album of Piano Pieces (CN101)

A Second Album of Piano Pieces (CN105)

Published Scores, duo piano, chamber music, concerto

G. Schirmer - Fantasy for Violin and Piano 1940 and Fantasie for Violin and Piano 1933, not yet published by Schirmer now owns the rights

ClarNan Editions – 2 volumes

Three Negro Spirituals for Two Pianos (CN103)

Piano Quintet in A Minor (CN102), edited by Dr. Lia Jensen-Abbott

Octet for Brasses and Piano, suite in 3 movements, edited by James Greeson

Center for Black Music Research - Piano Concerto in One Movement, score and parts reconstructed and edited by Dr. Trevor Weston <https://www.colum.edu/cbmr/>

Florence Price: A Historical Timeline

1887 - Born Florence Beatrice Smith in Little Rock, AR. Father, Dr. James Smith, was a respected black dentist, originally from Delaware. Mother, Florence Gulliver, was a dedicated black school teacher with some musical training, originally from Indiana

1896 - The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of racially "separate but equal" railroad facilities, paving the way for discriminatory "Jim Crow" laws in the South

- 1903 - Graduated from LR's Capitol Hill School, a segregated school, as valedictorian. Traveled to Boston and enrolled at the prestigious New England Conservatory of Music
- 1904 - The British black composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor came to Boston, conducting a concert tour of the USA
- 1906 - Graduated with honors from the New England Conservatory and two undergraduate degrees: a Soloist's Diploma in organ and a Teacher's Diploma in piano
- 1906 - Faculty member at the Cotton Plant Arkadelphia Academy in Cotton Plant, AR, a segregated school
- 1907-1910 - Faculty member at Shorter College in North Little Rock, AR, a segregated school
- 1910-1912 - Hired as the head of the Music Department of Clark University in Atlanta, GA, a segregated school.
- 1912 - Returned to Little Rock to marry black attorney, Thomas J. Price. She resumed teaching at Shorter College. She and her husband had 3 children
- 1917 - After the Arkansas State Music Teachers Association was founded, Price applied for membership, and was denied due to her race. She turned around and founded the Little Rock Club of Musicians, a professional organization for black members, to have an outlet for performance and composition, and networking
- 1919 - The Elaine Race Massacres occur in Elaine, AR. Thomas Price accepted related litigation cases, assisting Scipio Jones, the lead attorney defending 12 black men. The case proceeded all the way to the US Supreme Court; the defendants were acquitted
- 1919-1934 = the "Harlem Renaissance," post-WWI cultural flowering of a powerful community of black writers, poets, painters, and musicians, centered in New York's Harlem neighborhood
- 1920 - The Women's Suffrage Movement began with the determined speeches of Scottish immigrant Fanny Wright in 1820, but was not successful in attaining concrete results until a century later, with the ratification of the 19th amendment to the US Constitution in 1920 granting women the right to vote
- 1926 - Won 2nd prize in the Holstein Musical Competition for her piano suite, *In the Land 'o Cotton*
- 1927 - Lynchings, horrifyingly, peaked in Arkansas in the 1920s. The last straw for the Price family was the lynching of John Carter, near the law office of Thomas Price, in May 1927. Due to the worsening racial climate in Arkansas, the Price family fled, moving to Chicago, IL
- 1928 - Succeeded in getting piano pedagogy pieces published by G. Schirmer, and McKinley Music
- 1929 - Continued her musical education as a scholarship student at the American Conservatory of Music
- 1932 - Winner of first prize in the Rodman Wanamaker Music Competition for her Symphony No. 1 in E Minor. Her Piano Sonata in E Minor also won first prize, in the solo instrumental category
- 1933 - Frederick Stock gave the world premiere of her Symphony No. 1, making Price the first black woman composer to have a symphony played by a major American orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. George Gershwin attended the performance. Her "big break" with the Chicago Symphony led to other important performances that year, including one for the International Council of Women. Unfortunately, the symphony was not published until decades after Price's death
- 1934 - Featured composer at a concert in Pittsburgh by the National Association of Negro Musicians. Premiere of her Piano Concerto in Chicago by the Women's Symphony Orchestra
- 1936 - Featured in an article in *Etude* magazine entitled, "From Spirituals to Symphonies"
- 1939 - When contralto Marian Anderson performed her historic concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, she included Price's arrangement of the spiritual, "My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord"
- 1940 - Price accepted for membership in the National Association for American Composers and Conductors and the ASCAP. Marian Anderson presented her art song, a setting of Langston Hughes' "Songs to the Dark Virgin," to critical acclaim. Detroit WPA Symphony premieres her Symphony #3 with 1st lady Eleanor Roosevelt in attendance. Hired by Chicago's station WGN to provide orchestrations for songs for weekly broadcasts. Continued to compose concert works and seek performance and publication opportunities.
- 1953 - In June, Price died unexpectedly of a stroke at age 66. Her obituary was published the next month in *Musical America*

Milestones After Florence Price's Death

- 1964 - An elementary school in Chicago was renamed for Florence Price
- 1974 - The daughters of Florence Price donated their mother's papers to the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, establishing her archives in Special Collections
- 1984 - Dr. Barbara Garvey Jackson, editor, publisher, and musicologist, founded ClarNan Editions, dedicated to publishing music by historic women composers. In collaboration with Dr. Calvert Johnson, she published 4

- volumes of organ music by Price. [The company ClarNan is named for Clara Schumann, Nannerl Mozart, and Nannette Streicher, neé Stein (who built Beethoven's favorite pianos)]
- 1987 - Prof. Althea Waites released the recording, *Althea Waites Plays Piano Music of Florence Price* on the Cambria label
- Dr. Rae Linda Brown completed her Yale dissertation, "Selected Orchestral Music of Florence B. Price (1888 - 1953) in the Context of Her Life and Work"
- 1993 - Dr. Brown published an article in the journal *American Music*, "The Woman's Symphony Orchestra of Chicago and Florence B. Price's Piano Concerto in One Movement"
- 1994 - Dr. Earnest Lamb, musicologist, co-produced with Ben Fry a radio documentary on the life and music of Florence Price, "From Spiritual to Symphony" for Arkansas NPR affiliate KUAR. The special won a Gracie Award
- 1998 - Dr. Rae Linda Brown, musicologist and principal biographer of Price, convinced G. Schirmer to publish Price's award-winning Piano Sonata in E Minor
- 2000 - Dr. Linda Holzer, assistant prof. at U of Arkansas at Little Rock, published an article in *Clavier* magazine, "Jazz, Blues, and Gospel in Florence Price's Sonata in E Minor"
- 2001 - The Bay Area Women's Philharmonic issued a recording *The Music of Florence Price* on the Koch International label
- 2009 - An abandoned house in St. Anne, IL turned out to contain a treasure trove of lost manuscripts and papers of Price. A team from the Price archives in Fayetteville visited the site. The archives acquired the resources from the new owners of the property, providing valuable new materials for performers and scholars
- 2011 - The Center for Black Music Research undertook a project to record Price's Symphony No. 1 and Piano Concerto in One Movement; the score and parts for the concerto, which had been lost, were reconstructed by composer Trevor Weston based on existing two- and three-piano versions prepared by Price. The works were recorded by the Center's New Black Music Repertory Ensemble conducted by Leslie Dunner, featuring pianist Karen Walwyn as concerto soloist
- 2012 - Bob McQuiston produced a radio program on music of Florence Price, "Classical Lost and Found: Florence Price Rediscovered" for NPR Classical
- 2013 - Terrance McKnight produced a radio documentary on the life and music of Florence Price, "The Price of Admission," for New York City's WQXR
- 2015 - Dr. James Greeson, from U of Arkansas at Fayetteville, produced a video documentary on Florence Price, "The Caged Bird: the Life and Music of Florence Price"
- 2016 - 2017 - ClarNan Editions published several additional volumes of music by Price, from the re-discovered manuscripts from 2009
- 2018 - At the national conference of the Arkansas State Music Teachers Association in March, Florence Price was posthumously honored as an MTNA Foundation Fellow. Dr. Er-Gene Kahng, associate prof. at U of Arkansas at Fayetteville, released the recording, *Florence Price: Violin Concertos*, featuring the re-discovered violin music from 2009. Karen Tricot Steward produced a radio documentary, "Gathering the Pieces: the Florence Price Legacy" for Arkansas NPR affiliate KUAR. The first 30 minutes discuss the re-discovered manuscripts and papers, from 2009; the second half of the program features re-broadcast of the newly digitized 1994 radio documentary, "From Spiritual to Symphony." The Ft. Smith Symphony, in western Arkansas, under music director John Jeter, made history in May, giving the world premiere of Price's 4th symphony, and becoming the first orchestra to ever record Price's complete cycle of four symphonies, for the Naxos label. Prof. Holzer's article on piano music by Price, "This Is What Diversity Sounds Like," appeared in the Nov/Dec issue of *Clavier Companion* magazine

A scholarly biography of Florence Price, by the late Dr. Rae Linda Brown, is being prepared for publication by University of Illinois Press

Piano Repertoire, unpublished manuscripts, or lost

Concerto in d minor, for piano & orchestra

Rhapsody, for piano & orchestra

Piano Quintet No. 2

Piano Teaching Pieces – Vols. 1 & 2, *Beginning Pieces*, ClarNan Editions, (CN93 & 98)

Selected Additional Resources

Encyclopedia Arkansas

Florence Beatrice Smith Price <https://bit.ly/2EZCgrw>

William Grant Still <https://bit.ly/2TtKGQG>

Carrie Lena Fambro Still Shepperson <https://bit.ly/2NSPZDx>

Florence Price FaceBook Page: <https://bit.ly/2NTEKdL>

Bell-Tolliver, LaVerne. *The First Twenty-Five: An Oral History of the Desegregation of Little Rock's Public Junior High Schools*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2018.

The 1957 Desegregation Crisis at Central High School. Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site Visitor Center <https://bit.ly/2EZheco>

"The Road from Hell Is Paved with Little Rocks." Digital collection. University of Arkansas at Little Rock Center for Arkansas History and Culture. <https://ualrexhibits.org/desegregation/>

Central High Desegregation Crisis Video Clips. Video clips online at Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Arkansas Studies Institute (ASI) Research Portal: [Central High Video Clips](#)

"Dark History," nine-and-a-half-minute video about the Elaine Race Massacre, an episode of the New York Post's web series. UA Little Rock history professor, Dr. Brian Mitchell, is a featured expert, speaking about his recent research uncovering facts about the Elaine Race Massacre. <https://nyp.st/2XMYbd2>

Beals, Melba Pattillo. *Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High*. Little Rock: Washington Square Press, 1994

Cone, James H. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Ossining, NY: Orbis Books, 2013

Kirk, John A. *Beyond Little Rock: The Origins and Legacies of the Central High Crisis*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007

Margolick, David. *Elizabeth and Hazel: Two Women of Little Rock*. New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 2011

"Raye Montague, the Navy's 'Hidden Figure' Ship Designer, Dies at 83," *New York Times*, obituary, Oct. 18, 2018. <https://nyti.ms/2P6VxBw>

Will Counts: the Central High School Photographs. Arkansas Arts Center Exhibit. <https://bit.ly/2TspPgV>

Children's Book:

Eckford, Elizabeth, with Eurydice S Stanley and Grace Stanley. *The Worst First Day: Bullied While Desegregating Central High*. Pensacola, FL: Lamp Press, LLC, 2018