



Florence Beatrice Price

BIOGRAPHY

Florence B. Price was the first black woman to become well-known as a composer. In fact, she was the first black woman whose music was played by a major orchestra. She is remembered as a great composer who succeeded despite a lot of challenges.

Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1887. She learned to play music from a young age; her mother had been a music teacher, and she gave lessons to all of her children. Florence had a talent for music, and she had composed her first work by the age of 11.

Unfortunately, the world didn't see her talent. She had to claim to be Mexican to go to college because colleges didn't want to teach African Americans. Although she wrote music during college, she was expected to become a teacher and nothing more. After graduating, she moved back to Little Rock, where she composed in private while teaching and raising 2 children.

By the late 1920s, there was too much racism in Little Rock for Price's family to live safely. They moved to Chicago, where she had more success as a composer. She joined important musical groups and, for the first time, shared her music with artists who spread the word about her talent. Soon, her music was being printed across America and performances of her work were played on the radio around the world.

When money problems led to her divorce, Florence began composing under a fake name to support her family. While writing songs for ads, she continued to work on her own music. During this time, she even wrote her first symphony. She composed through the '30s and '40s, creating a unique style which blended African, African American, and European music.

Even as she became more popular, Price found it difficult to get her music published. Much of it disappeared after '50s, and it hasn't been until recently that the music has been rediscovered. In recent years, as people seek out more diverse composers across history, she has become popular once again. She leaves behind over 300 works and a life of incredible achievement.

READINGS, RESOURCES, AND VIDEOS

[Revisiting The Pioneering Composer Florence Price from NPR](#)

[The Inspirational Life of Florence Price from ClassicFM](#)

[The Caged Bird: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price \(3 minute opening excerpt from documentary\)](#)

[The Caged Bird: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price \(15 minute opening excerpt from documentary\)](#)