

Council at the young age of 22, and he continued on in that capacity until his death. At the same time, Posey worked as a field worker for the Dawes Commission. The Dawes Commission was formed on March 3, 1893 to give Native Americans, who were on tribal land that was being dissolved and sold off to settlers, the opportunity to become citizens of the United States and buy some of the land that they had previously owned by rights. It was a difficult line for Posey to straddle, because if he helped the Commission he would seem like a traitor to his people, but if he did not help, then there would be no Native American voice in the commission to make certain that the Native Americans were treated as fairly as possible. Many misunderstood Posey's purpose for being on the commission.

Posey believed that Native Americans needed to at least partially assimilate with whites if they were going to get along in the world with any success. People called him a progressivist because of this theory. Posey criticized those Native Americans who believed that Native Americans should separate from the white American culture, although he did respect older Native Americans who could remember another, different way of life. He just did not believe it was feasible to live in the past any longer. Because of this line of thinking Posey had been despised among Creeks for his part in the official procedures surrounding the break up of the tribal government and for his efforts in selling part of the Creek lands as real estate ventures. Posey, however, believed he had to work with the outside government because this position allowed him the strongest podium to argue against it. He wrote some of the most well-argued and far-sighted critiques of both the bureaucracy and the voracity outsiders felt to gain land traditionally belonging to Native Americans. It was a difficult time for Posey to live, as the politics involved between the Creek Nation and the United States were exceptionally complicated, but Posey tried to walk a line between his Creek ancestral way of life and his new country, often writing humorous essays to deal with those complexities.

Head of the *Indian Journal*

In 1902 Posey became the owner and editor of the *Indian Journal* at Eufaula. Within the confines of the journal Posey was finally able to state his views on the way his world was changing. He dealt with the horribly complex issues of Native American assimilation and the break up of lands that had belonged to Native Americans for centuries in a funny and often touching manner. He was recognized nationally for his work with the paper, which was the first Native American-published daily newspaper in the United States. It was while he was working for the paper that he began publishing his *Fus Fixico* (Heartless Bird) essays. They took the place of editorials and were written by Posey from the perspective of a full-blooded Creek man writing about his everyday life in the constantly changing Creek world. "Sometimes read as expressions of nostalgia for a vanishing way of life, the *Fus Fixico* letters are also cogent political commentary aimed at influencing Native American Territory, Oklahoma, and United States politics," according to the Houghton Mifflin College Division Web Site. Posey was named Poet Laureate of the Indian Territory Press Associa-

tion in 1903 for his work as a poet and newspaperman. Posey owned the paper, which was very successful in many markets, for six years before he died on May 27, 1908. He drowned while crossing the Oktahutche River while it was flooding. He was only thirty-five years old.

Almost one hundred years after his death, Posey's writings are still circulating. *The Fus Fixico Letters*, edited by Carol Hunter and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., were published to give the world a taste of the wit and astuteness that marked Posey during his life. According to *World Literature Today*, "What emerges is a playful, tongue-in-cheek account of Posey's often trenchant criticisms of federal policy, state politics, and the foibles of local Creek leaders as they engaged their new neighbors and supposed protectors." And *Atlantic Monthly* said of the author, "Posey was an intelligent journalist (he correctly predicted the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War) and his humor retains mirth and bite despite time and changes of literary fashion." Other books published of Posey's works are *The Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey*, and *Poems of Alexander Lawrence Posey, Creek Indian Bard*.

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Florence Beatrice Price

Florence B. Price (1887-1953) was the first African-American woman in history to have a symphony she composed performed by a major orchestra. Price wrote works in genres ranging from orchestral music to radio commercials, and her music, widely heard in its day, has been rediscovered as researchers have delved into the early days of classical music composed by African Americans.

In spite of a difficult life that involved a flight from the violence of Southern segregation and on-and-off periods of sparse financial resources, Price was a prolific composer. She wrote more than 300 works, and her fame extended to many American cities and even to England. Sometimes characterized as a musical conservative, Price wrote crowd-pleasing romantic works that drew on the musical language of the late nineteenth century. She also incorporated specifically African-American traits into her compositions—not, as was sometimes done at the time, by quoting the melodies of African-American spirituals, but by organizing her music in line with the importance of rhythm in African-based musical traditions.

Born to Dentist and Music Teacher

Born Florence Beatrice Smith in Little Rock, Arkansas, on April 9, 1887, Price was the daughter of James Smith, a prominent Little Rock dentist who had been born to free blacks in Delaware. He was also a painter whose work was exhibited at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Her mother, also named Florence, was a music teacher from Indianapolis. Classical music was valued in the household, and all three Smith children took piano lessons from their mother. The standout from the beginning was Price, who gave a recital at age four. Price attended elementary school in Little Rock and had another future American symphonic great, William Grant Still, as a classmate. Both students were influenced and inspired by one of the area's legendary African-American educators, Charlotte Andrews Stephens, who had herself dreamed of becoming a composer but was stymied by financial problems. Price graduated in 1903 from Capitol High School in Little Rock; she was valedictorian of her class.

Price had already published a few compositions by that time, and she was admitted to the New England Conservatory of Music. At her mother's urging, Price tried, apparently successfully, to "pass" as Mexican; she listed her hometown as Puebla, Mexico, and as late as 1906 a conservatory yearbook still gave that city as her family's residence. Segregation in New England was much less severe, however, and Price met other African-American students who were enrolled at the conservatory. Studying piano and organ, Price aimed toward a career as a music teacher. But she also took composition lessons from members of the school's faculty, which included some of the top composers in the United States. One of them, George Whitefield Chadwick, was a follower of nationalist styles and urged Price to incorporate African-American materials into her music; despite the rampant prejudice of the day, many musical observers believed that African-American spirituals could form the basis for a distinctively American school of classical music. Price found time to write several major compositions during her student years, even as she traveled as far as Nantucket Island to make extra money by playing at church services. She graduated in 1906 with teaching certificates in piano and organ, and returned to Arkansas to teach at Shorter College in North Little Rock.

Even in the midst of the South's segregated educational system, Price's music attracted notice; the white Memphis

composer and educator Neumon Leighton heard some of her songs and assigned them to voice students. She moved to Atlanta in 1910 to head the music department at Clark University there, returning to Little Rock in 1912 to marry lawyer Thomas J. Price. For several years her musical activities were confined to giving lessons in a private studio. Price's daughter Florence Louise was born in 1917, and another daughter, Edith, followed in 1921. From time to time she mailed off compositions to musical competitions sponsored by magazines, and in 1925 and 1927 she took second prize in an *Opportunity* magazine contest. Most of her pieces at this point were songs; one of them was written in memory of a third child, a son who was stillborn.

Shocked by a terrorist attack—a lynching—in their neighborhood, Price and her family moved to Chicago, Illinois, in 1927. With both her children now in school, Price jumped at the opportunity to broaden her musical education. She took classes at a variety of educational institutions, including the Chicago Musical College, American Conservatory of Music, Chicago Teachers College, Central YMCA College, Lewis Institute, and the University of Chicago. Price financed her musical activities partly by accompanying silent films on the organ. She faced dire financial straits off and on, and at one point she moved in with one of her piano students, Margaret Bonds, who later became a noted composer herself.

Welcomed Broken Foot

In spite of these problems, Price found the musical atmosphere in Chicago stimulating. She met other African Americans interested in classical music, including William Dawson, a composer who later taught at the Tuskegee Institute and became a prolific arranger of spirituals. Price's studies and musical interactions began to bear fruit around 1928, when the G. Schirmer and McKimley publishing companies began to issue her songs, piano music, and especially her instructional pieces for piano. Price also applied her newfound musical knowledge to the composition of works larger than piano pieces and songs. When she could, she worked on a symphony. Early in 1931 she wrote to a friend (as quoted in an article by Barbara Garvey Jackson in *Black Perspective in Music*), "I found it possible to snatch a few precious days in the month of January in which to write undisturbed. But oh, dear me, when shall I ever be so fortunate again as to break a foot?."

The work made possible by the broken foot was Price's Symphony No. 1 in E minor, which she entered in the annual Wanamaker music competition for 1932. It took the top honor, the Wanamaker Prize, bringing Price a much-needed cash award of \$500. Price also won several other smaller prizes in the same competition that year, and her student Margaret Bonds also took a prize for her song "The Sea Ghost." As a result of the prize for Price's symphony, the work crossed the desk of Chicago Symphony Orchestra conductor Frederick Stock, who put the work on the program for a concert held at the Century of Progress fair in 1933. That concert marked the first time a major orchestra had performed a symphony by a black, woman composer.

Price experienced another success the following year with her Piano Concerto in One Movement, which she performed as a soloist with the Chicago Woman's Symphony Orchestra. A reviewer in the *Chicago Herald and Examiner* (quoted in *American Music* by Rae Linda Brown) termed it "the most successful effort to date to lift the native folk-song idiom of the Negro to artistic levels." The work used the rhythm of the slave "juba" dance, which involved body percussion, and it became one of Price's most popular pieces.

The rhythmic approach of the piano concerto was typical of Price's attitude toward African-American folk or vernacular musical materials. Jackson quoted Price, who wrote in a set of program notes for her Symphony in E minor, "It is intended to be Negroid in character and expression. In it no attempt, however, has been made to project Negro music solely in the purely traditional manner. None of the themes are adaptations or derivations of folk songs." Instead, Price focused on rhythm. In program notes for a performance of a set of piano pieces, she wrote (quoted by Jackson) that "In all types of Negro music, rhythm is of preeminent importance. In the dance, it is a compelling, onward-sweeping force that tolerates no interruption. . . . All phases of truly Negro activity—whether work or play, singing or praying—are more than apt to take on a rhythmic quality." Some of Price's piano works used syncopation in a classical context in an unusual and distinctive way. A few of her works, such as the *Mississippi River Suite*, did quote spirituals.

Set Langston Hughes Text

Price's compositional reputation continued to spread in the late 1930s. She performed the Piano Concerto in One Movement with the Detroit Symphony, and she wrote other orchestral works that were performed in Chicago. The list of large ensembles that performed Price's works also included the Michigan WPA Symphony, the Brooklyn Symphony, the Bronx Symphony, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Chicago Chamber Orchestra, the New York City Symphonic Band, and the U.S. Marine Band. Around 1940, pioneering operatic soprano Marian Anderson began singing Price's arrangement of the spiritual "My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord." She then performed Price's original setting of the Langston Hughes poem cycle "Songs to a Dark Virgin," which a *Chicago Daily News* reviewer (quoted by Jackson) called "one of the greatest immediate successes ever won by an American song." The Hughes song cycle was published in 1941, and other leading black vocalists, among them Leontyne Price and Roland Hayes, began to sing Price's vocal music. Among her other admirers was com-

poser John Alden Carpenter, who sponsored her for membership in the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Performers (ASCAP).

Price continued to write music through the 1940s and early 1950s, penning two concertos for violin and orchestra as well as three more symphonies, one of which has apparently been lost. She gained recognition as far away as England, where conductor John Barbirolli commissioned a Suite for Strings from Price and premiered it with the famed Hallé Orchestra in Manchester. Parts of Price's output were written for specific uses; she wrote music for choruses that performed on radio station WGN, and her organ music was heard in churches around Chicago. This music has been little studied even as other aspects of Price's catalog have been rediscovered. Price died in Chicago after suffering a stroke, on June 3, 1953.

The tuneful and rhythmically lively style of Price's music plainly pleased audiences at the time, but as ultramodern styles gained currency after her death, her music was eclipsed. In the 1970s scholarly investigations into music by African Americans and women brought a new appreciation of her accomplishments. Few recordings of her work appeared at first, but a disc of Price's orchestral works was recorded by the Bay Area Women's Philharmonic, and by 2002 some 20 of her pieces had been issued on CD. Given the positive reactions that audiences had to Price's music during her lifetime, her music now seemed a good bet for an ensemble hoping to make a name by reviving worthwhile but unknown music of the past.

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