

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

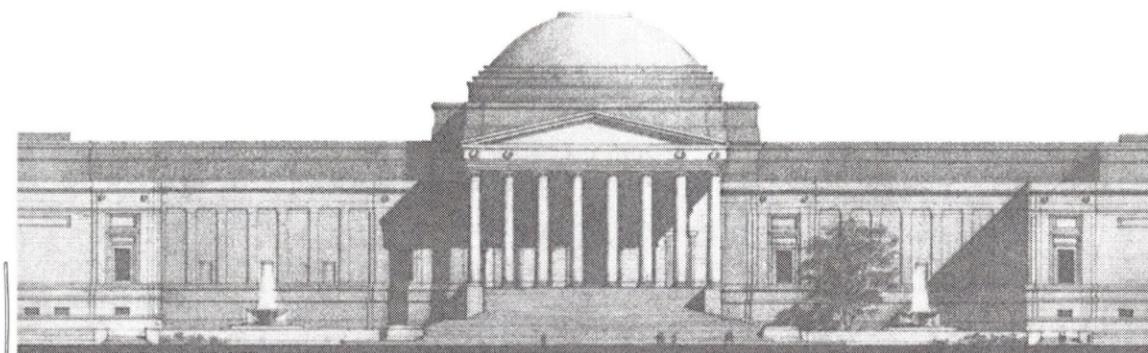
Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

For the convenience of concertgoers, the Garden Café remains open for light refreshments until 6:00 pm on Sundays.

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

www.nga.gov

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The Seventy-Third Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
3,039th Concert

Marian Anderson String Quartet
Marianne Henry and Nicole Cherry, violins
Diedra Lawrence, viola
Prudence McDaniel, cello
with
Celeste Headlee, narrator

Presented in honor of African American History Month

February 22, 2015
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Program

William Grant Still (1895–1978)

Songs of Separation

Arr. Robert W. Pound (b. 1970)

Idolatry (Poem by Arna Bontemps)

Poème (Poem by Phillipe Thoby-Marcelin)

Parted (Poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar)

If You Should Go (Poem by Countee Cullen)

Black Pierrot (Poem by Langston Hughes)

Jonathan B. McNair (b. 1959)

Follow the Drinking Gourd for String Quartet (2014)*

Introduction and Sing-Along Chorus

On Being Enslaved

When the First Quail Calls

Rivers and Hills

INTERMISSION

Frederick Delius (1862–1934)

String Quartet in E Minor (1917)

With animation

Quick and lightly

Slow and wistfully, “Late Swallows”

Very quick and vigorously

The Musicians

In 1992 Marian Anderson gave the Chaminade Quartet permission to use her name as their own, after they had won the International Cleveland Quartet Competition, making them the first African American ensemble in history to win a classical competition. In a memorable show of gratitude, the Marian Anderson String Quartet performed a private recital for their namesake in her home in Portland, Oregon.

The winners of the 2008 Guarneri String Quartet Award and the 2006 Congress of Racial Equality Martin Luther King Award for Excellence in Arts and Culture, the Marian Anderson String Quartet is equally at home in the concert hall and the classroom. With performance venues that range from the 1993 Presidential Inauguration, Alice Tully Hall, and the Library of Congress, to soup kitchens and juvenile correctional facilities, the quartet continues to uphold its mission to create new and diverse audiences for American chamber music.

The quartet is currently quartet-in-residence at Blinn College in Brenham, Texas, and recently founded the Marian Anderson String Quartet Community Music School, a nonprofit organization in Bryan, Texas. In May 2015 the quartet will be the inaugural Heimark artists-in-residence at the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice at Brown University.

CELESTE HEADLEE

Celeste Headlee is an award-winning journalist and an active soprano. She hosts the public radio show *On Second Thought* in Atlanta and also has hosted *Tell Me More*, *Talk of the Nation*, and *The Takeaway* for national audiences. In her musical life, she appears on the CD *Classically Blue* from gospel artist Lea Gilmore. She has given performances for the National Gallery of Art, the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Colorado College, the Detroit Institute of Arts, Yavapai College, Wagner College, Wayne State University, and other venues. She performed with the Michigan Opera Theatre for six years while in Detroit and served as guest artistic director of the National Gallery’s 2013 American Music Festival.

*Dedicated to the Marian Anderson String Quartet

Program Notes

SONGS OF SEPARATION

Born in Woodville, Mississippi, William Grant Still was the son of two teachers. His father, who performed as a local bandleader, died when Still was three months old. His mother then moved the family to Little Rock, Arkansas, where she taught high school English for thirty-three years. She married Charles B. Shepperson, who nurtured Still's musical interests by taking him to operettas and buying him Red Seal recordings of classical music.

Still started violin lessons at age fifteen and taught himself to play the clarinet, saxophone, oboe, double bass, cello, and viola. After high school, his mother wanted him to go to medical school, so he attended Wilberforce University, Ohio, for a science degree. While there, he conducted the university band and started to compose. He was awarded a scholarship to study at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

In 1918 Still joined the United States Navy to serve in World War I, after which he worked as an arranger for W. C. Handy's band, and later played in the pit orchestra for Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake's musical, *Shuffle Along*. In the 1930s, Still worked as an arranger of popular music, writing for the popular NBC Radio broadcasts *Deep River Hour* and *Old Gold Show*. He then moved to Los Angeles and arranged music for films that included *Pennies from Heaven* and *Lost Horizon*. In 1936 he conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and became the first African American to conduct a major American orchestra.

He also was the first African American to have an opera performed on national television, when *A Bayou Legend* (1941) premiered on PBS in 1981. In 1949 his opera *Troubled Island*, about the Haitian revolutionary Jean-Jacques Dessalines (1758–1806) was performed by the New York City Opera and represented the first opera by an African American to be staged by a major company.

During his life William Grant Still received two Guggenheim Fellowships and was awarded honorary doctorates from Oberlin College, Wilberforce University, Howard University, Bates College, the University of Arkansas, Pepperdine University, the New England Conservatory of Music, the Peabody Conservatory, and the University of Southern California. He was posthumously awarded the 1982 Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters award for music composition for his opera, *A Bayou Legend*. He is often respectfully referred to as "the Dean" of African American composers.

Songs of Separation may be Still's most ambitious work originally written for voice and piano; it is a cycle of five thematically related songs set to the writing of Harlem Renaissance poets. Robert W. Pound's string arrangement of *Songs of Separation* premiered in 2013 by the Marian Anderson String Quartet on their program *Songs of Freedom and the Emancipation Proclamation* at Brown University.

FOLLOW THE DRINKING GOURD FOR STRING QUARTET

The suite *Follow the Drinking Gourd* takes inspiration from the story of the Underground Railroad, a network of secret routes and safe houses that helped enslaved people escape to free states. The song refers to the Big Dipper constellation, whose code name was the Drinking Gourd. The stars in this constellation helped guide the escapees in their nocturnal flight. Also alluded to in the song are the best times of year to escape, the markings that confirmed pathways, and the natural landmarks that indicated the proximity of safer territory.

The audience is invited to sing along with the song's chorus at the beginning and the end of the suite.

*Follow the drinking gourd, Follow the drinking gourd,
For the old man is a waitin', For to carry you to freedom
if you follow the drinking gourd.*

Portions of the folk melody appear in each of the other movements, as the music reflects on the story of an escaping African American family. Additionally, three African American spirituals are quoted in the work: movement two, "On Being Enslaved," quotes "Go Down, Moses" and "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child"; movement three includes "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me." The movement also reflects the sounds and signals an escaped slave might hear traveling the Underground Railroad. Whistles, quail calls, feet running, leaves rustling, and water flowing are all represented by string techniques such as pizzicato, trills, col legno, harmonics, and ponticello. "Rivers and Hills," the placid and serene fourth movement, represents the passage through the Ohio River to freedom. Jeanette Winter's children's book, *Follow the Drinking Gourd* (Knopf, 1988) is the inspiration for this musical suite.

Jonathan B. McNair's music has been described by critics as "skillfully crafted . . . expressive and rhythmic." His works have been performed across the United States in national and regional conferences and festivals, faculty recitals, and professional concerts, as well as professional performances in Canada, Austria, England, and Brazil. Selected works appear on the Capstone, ACA Digital, and AUR labels, and are published by Potenza Music and Keepe Publishing House. McNair was recently appointed to be the Ruth S. Holmberg Professor of American Music at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, where he has produced or collaborated on eight regional music festivals focused on new music. He is currently president of the Southeastern Composers League.

STRING QUARTET IN E MINOR

Frederick Delius was born to a prosperous mercantile family in northern England. Uninterested in pursuing a commercial career, he was sent to Florida in 1884 to manage an orange plantation named Solano Grove. He later said that one of the earliest experiences influencing his artistic development was the sound of plantation songs carrying down the river to him. That singing gave him the urge to express himself in music. "Thus," wrote Delius's musical assistant Eric Fenby, "many of Delius's early works are redolent of Negro hymnology and folk song, a sound not heard before in the orchestra."

After 1918 Delius began to suffer the effects of syphilis, contracted during his earlier years in Paris. He became paralyzed and blind, but completed some late compositions between 1928 and 1932 with the aid of Fenby.

If there is a quartet that exemplifies what it means to be unjustly neglected, this is the one. Delius's music is often described as "romantic impressionism." You can hear the lasting influence of his friend Edvard Grieg, tinged with the sensuality of Wagner and Strauss. Delius's lyrical writing is most pronounced in the central two movements, and "Late Swallows" is the centerpiece of the quartet. Some of the melody heard in this passage can be traced back thirty years to his fascination with Negro Spirituals.

Program Notes contributed by the Marian Anderson String Quartet

Idolatry - Arna Bontemps

You have been good to me, I give you this:
The arms of lovers empty as our own,
Marble lips sustaining one long kiss
And the hard sound of hammers breaking stone.

For I will build a chapel in the place
Where our love died and I will journey there
To make a sign and kneel before your face
And set an old bell tolling on the air.

Poeme – Philippe Thoby Marcelin

Ce n'était pas l'aurore,
Mais je m'étais levé
En me frottant les yeux.
Tout dormait alentour.

Les bananiers sous ma fenêtre,
Frissonnaient dans le clair de lune,
Calme.
Alors, j'ai pris ma tête dans mes mains
Et j'ai pensé à vous.

(Translation from original French)
It was not yet dawn,
But I arose
Rubbing my eyes.
Around, all slept.

Under my window, the banana trees
Shivered in the moonlight,
Calm.
Then, I held my head in my hands
And I thought of you

Parted – Paul Laurence Dunbar

She wrapped her soul in a lace of lies,
With a prime deceit to pin it;
And I thought I was gaining a fearsome prize,
So I staked my soul to win it.

We wed and parted on her complaint,
And both were a bit of barter,
Tho' I'll confess that I'm no saint,
I'll swear that she's no martyr.

If I Should Go – Countee Cullen

Love, leave me like the light,
The gently passing day;
We would not know, but for the night,
When it has slipped away.
Go quietly; a dream,
When done, should leave no trace
That it has lived, except a gleam
Across the dreamer's face

Black Pierrot – Langston Hughes

I am a black Pierrot:
She did not love me,
So I crept away into the night
And the night was black, too.

I am a black Pierrot:
She did not love me,
So I wept until the dawn
Dripped blood over the eastern hills
And my heart was bleeding, too.

I am a black Pierrot:
She did not love me,
So with my once gay-colored soul
Shrunken like a balloon without air,
I went forth in the morning
To seek a new brown love.