

QUARTER NOTES

News for Hartford Symphony Orchestra Donors & Friends



FLORENCE PRICE

April 9, 1887 – June 3, 1953

Welcome to the first installment of a new Quarter Notes column: *De-Composed*, a feature that explores the composers we want to know better.

As this Spring issue of Quarter Notes immediately follows Black History Month (February) and falls within Women's History Month (March), it is the perfect moment to introduce you to our first selected composer, Florence Price, a Black woman composer whose 144th birthday we celebrate on April 9, 2021. The music of Florence Price was to have been performed on our January 2021 Masterworks program. The program was to have featured her Concerto for Piano, performed by guest soloist Michelle Cann, led by guest conductor Jeri Lynne Johnson, showcasing a trifecta of accomplished Black women musicians. Both Michelle and Jeri Lynne were Carolyn's special guests on our January Masterworks In-Depth Program, so the music of Florence Price has taken on a special significance for the Hartford Symphony.

Florence Price was the first Black



woman to have her composition performed by a major American symphony orchestra. Her piece, Symphony in E minor, was performed by the Chicago Symphony on June 15, 1933, under the direction of Frederick Stock.¹ She made history and but for a quirk of fate, she was very nearly lost to it.

In 2009, Vicki and Darrell Gatwood of St. Anne, Illinois, were preparing to renovate an abandoned house. A tree had torn a hole in the roof, and

the entire house was in abysmal condition. But, in one section of the house that was still dry, the Gatwoods found boxes of books, musical manuscripts and personal papers, with a name that they didn't know: Florence Price.² When preliminary research revealed that Florence

Price had been a composer based in Chicago, the couple contacted the University of Arkansas, which had a collection of some of Price's works.³ The St. Anne house, Price's summer residence, contained dozens of scores that archivists never knew existed.⁴ Among the many scores found in the house were two violin concertos, and a fourth symphony. Given that Price was female and black, it is little wonder that her name – and her magnificent compositions – were long ignored.

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Florence Price, seated on the far right. National Association of Negro Musicians board members. L-r: Blanche K. Thompson, Josephine Inness, Henry L. Grant, Mary Cardwell Dawson, Clarence Hayden Wilson, and Florence B. Price. January 1941. Charles 'Teenie' Harris/Teenie Harris Archive/Carnegie Museum of Art/Getty Images

Florence Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. Her father was a dentist and her mother was a school teacher, businesswoman, and a private piano teacher.⁵ Price's mother was her first music teacher, and Price was the valedictorian of her high school, Capitol Hill School in Little Rock, when she graduated in 1903.⁶ She was accepted to continue her music studies at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, one of the few conservatories to accept Black students.⁷ She graduated with a degree as an organist and as a piano teacher, and returned to Arkansas to teach at the Cotton Plant-Arkadelphia Academy. After a year, she took a position at Shorter College in North Little Rock. From there, she became head of the music department at Clark University in Atlanta, Georgia.⁸

In 1912, Price returned to Little Rock to marry Thomas Jewell Price, an attorney. She established a teaching studio and taught music, but despite her stellar credentials, racism was

evident when she was denied membership into the Arkansas State Music Teachers Association.⁹ By 1927, worsening racial tensions and a lynching near Thomas' office persuaded the Price family to relocate to Chicago,¹⁰ where Price pursued composition studies at the American Conservatory of Music and Chicago Musical College.¹¹ Price became a well-known teacher, pianist and organist and by 1928, she had published four pieces for piano.¹²

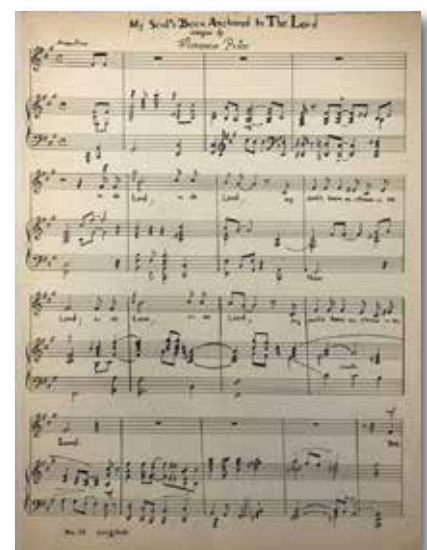
In 1931, Florence and Thomas divorced. To support herself and their two young daughters, Price began to work as an organist for silent film screenings and composed songs for radio ads.¹³

In 1932, Price and her friend, fellow composer and housemate, Margaret Bonds, entered a competition sponsored by the Wanamaker Foundation. Price took first prize for her Symphony in E minor, and third prize for another composition, while Bonds won first prize in the song

category.¹⁴ As the first-place winner, Price's composition was performed by the Chicago Symphony, the first time that a major symphony performed the work of a virtually unknown composer, a Black woman. Shortly thereafter, other orchestras in Detroit, Pittsburgh and Brooklyn, New York, also performed her work.¹⁵

There are volumes of compositions by Price ready for exploration, and in 2018, the complete catalog of her works was acquired by the New York music publishing firm, G. Schirmer. One of Price's most famous songs, *My Soul's Been Anchored in De Lord*, was performed at one of the most important concerts ever held in America.


On Easter Sunday, 1939, the world heard a performance of the piece by a Black soprano, Marian Anderson, from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The concert was originally planned to take place at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., but Anderson was barred from appearing because of her race.



Eleanor Roosevelt, then First Lady, stepped in, and the entire event was moved to the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The concert was broadcast on the radio and reached an audience numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Anderson chose to end her performance with Price's composition.

While Price did remarry (to Pusey Dell Arnett, an insurance agent and former baseball player for the Chicago Unions), they separated in 1934 and never divorced. Arnett passed



away in 1957, and Price died in Chicago in 1953 from an apparent stroke. Today, as we explore the brilliant works of a gifted composer, the music evokes feelings of gratitude. We are all the beneficiaries of the Gatwoods' fortunate discovery. 

Want to learn more?

Enjoy this video excerpt from *The Caged Bird: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93BYQ7Cex7M&t=64s>

And there's still more – enjoy these links to other works by Florence Price:

Florence Price: Concerto in One Movement, with pianist Karen Walwyn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZ54dddRI08>

Florence Price: Symphony No. 1 in E minor: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9s4yY_A2A2k&feature=emb_logo

Leontyne Price performing My Soul's Been Anchored in De Lord: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAu3QMuwWqw&feature=emb_logo

The Apollo String Quartet performing Five Folksongs in Counterpoint: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WESnBCeof6M&feature=emb_logo

And for a special treat, here are three of the pieces discovered in the St. Anne house:

Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAw16T8BPQg>

Violin Concerto No. 2 performed by the Urban Playground Chamber Orchestra with soloist Kelly Hall-Tompkins: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMRTUI-rNkc>

Symphony No. 4 in D minor: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Py0D9-YOc4s>

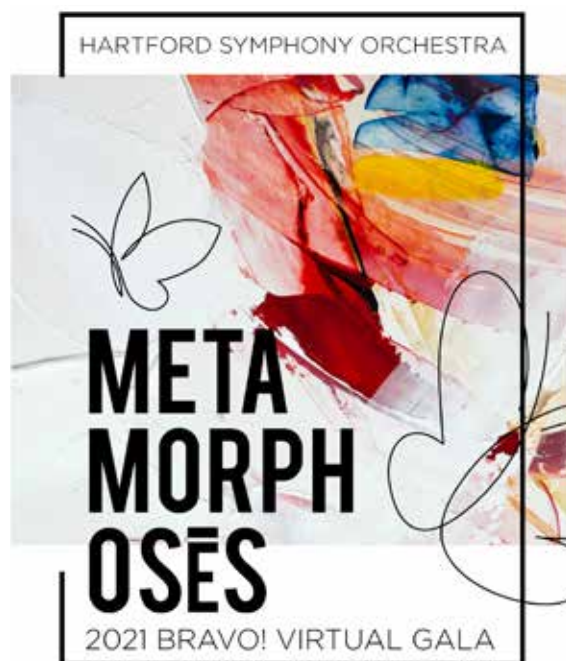
The HSO was one of the first to host a virtual Gala in May of 2020 to enormous success. On May 1, 2021, we're doing it again – and we need your help.

Met · a · mor · pho · sēs (-sez')

- a. a series of miraculous transformations
- b. the being that has undergone a striking alteration in appearance or character

It's been a tough year, and, as a community, we've experienced physical, emotional and financial loss. This year's virtual event, *Metamorphosēs*, acknowledges our communal and individual traumas, but also celebrates the future we build together. You, our audiences, and our musicians, are two halves of the same whole. Each feels incomplete without the other. We want to return to who we are, because we are at our best when we are together.


The proceeds raised from this important event pave the road back, helping the HSO to support our musicians and serve our community. We have all been changed, but we are determined to focus on the silver linings and strive to reconnect our two halves. To help make our dreams reality, we will gather in the only shared space available – a virtual one.



Please Save the Date for Saturday, May 1, 2021 at 7PM.

While these past months have been a challenge, we also gather to celebrate a milestone, Carolyn Kuan's 10th season with the HSO. Our Gala will honor

and acknowledge Carolyn, our innovative and beloved Music Director, and, under her leadership, we've created exciting new Gala-only performances just for you.

Mark the date on your calendars – and invite your friends. We have a "tip sheet" with ideas to help you create a virtual table and enhance your celebration with friends. Our virtual auction features new items at every price range, from cooking lessons with renowned local chefs, unique family getaways, and even a bathroom renovation package valued at \$10,000. For \$100, you can win a magnificent diamond necklace valued at \$6500. You can join for free (advance registration required), but we hope that you will investigate the many meal/ticket options, such as our newest **45-And-Under** package or our unique **Out-of-Towner Cocktail Kit**, specially created by Hartford Flavor Company for this event. 

For more details, please visit our newly designed *Metamorphosēs* website at: www.hartfordsymphony.org/bravo. We'll see you there!

IT'S OFFICIAL – IT'S VIRTUAL – AND THE YAC IS BACK!



If we've learned one thing during this pandemic, it's that we are often asked to make hard choices. To our delight, there are times when those choices open new opportunities. Such is the case with HSO's 43rd Young Artists Competition, which will return in 2021. In 2020, in anticipation of an in-person competition, with the rare opportunity for all finalists to perform their final round in a public performance with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, our young musicians submitted their application. And then the pandemic struck. The decision to proceed with the competition in a virtual format was the right one. The 2020 42nd Young Artist Competition was an enormous success. Our finalists were given the opportunity to pursue their goals, hone their skills, and all three winners were rewarded for their remarkable skill, tenacity and artistry.

Our desire to return to an in-person event for 2021 delayed the start of our Young Artists Competition, but ultimately, the decision was made for us. The competition had to again be virtual. This year, the silver lining is that we've streamlined the process and moved the entire application and competition to an online format. This will simplify the application process in future years, even when we return to an in-person competition.

The rules for this year's competition are simple: it is open to high school students between 9th and 12th grade, applicants must reside in Connecticut, and all submissions must be made through the HSO website by May 15th. The changes for 2021 are significant and may well open the door to many new students.


Repertoire changes: In past years, the fixed repertoire list for each instrument required applicants to prepare both a solo piece as well

as a movement from a designated concerto. The repertoire was designed to help prepare applicants for a possible performance with the Hartford Symphony, should they be selected as finalists. Without the promise of an orchestra performance this year, we had to re-think the required repertoire, with the result that it affords applicants much greater flexibility in their selections. The student is asked to perform an excerpt or movement from a larger work of the student's own choosing and the second selection must be a piece intended for solo instrument. We recognize that the changed requirements may encourage students to select pieces from outside the traditional classical canon, which widens the field of participation.

Number of rounds: In past years, we had three rounds. The first or preliminary round was an audio

submission, and the next two rounds were in-person. This year, there will be two rounds instead of three, and both will be virtual. In the first round, applicants must submit a 'one-take' video recording of their two selections, to be judged by HSO musicians. If an applicant is selected to proceed or "advance", the second round will utilize judges outside the HSO. An invitation to participate in the second round includes an option for students to rely on their initial recording or submit a new one.

Selection of the winners: The first, second and third place winners will be chosen by June 4th, with prizes of \$1000, \$750 and \$500. The first-place winner may have the opportunity to create a special recorded performance with the HSO, and the performance will then be made available to the public. All three winners will be offered the opportunity to submit a recording, to be posted on the HSO's website.

As in prior years, donors who make gifts designated to support these young artists, will be given the chance to meet with our young winners on a date to be determined. Last year, the inability to meet in person prompted us to create a virtual reception space, and the ensuing conversation between students, donors and judges, including Leonid Sigal (HSO Concertmaster) created a fascinating and uplifting event. This year, we are weighing all of our options in the hope we might be able to schedule an outdoor reception for our young winners and donors. At a minimum, we will again meet in a private virtual space as we did last year. 



YES – I want to help jump start the careers of aspiring young musicians!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please list me in the program as follows:

Donor levels begin at just \$250.00. All donors will be listed in the program.

I pledge: \$2500 _____ \$1500 _____ \$1000 _____ \$500 _____ \$250 _____

To support the HSO's 43rd YOUNG ARTISTS COMPETITION
and provide need-based student scholarships:

Please charge the payment to my credit card: ___ Am Ex ___ VISA ___ MC ___ Discover
Card No. _____ Exp. Date: _____ Code: _____

Name as it appears on card: _____

OR

Please bill me for my pledge using the following payment plan: _____

OR

I would like to make a secure donation via the HSO's website as follows:

**Interested in becoming a YAC supporter?
Just click this link to make your donation and in the
comment box below the gift amount, indicate YAC 2021**



INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST MUSICIAN SPONSORSHIP:

DIANE & GARY WHITNEY, the new sponsors of JEANNE WILSON, piccolo/flute



Gary and Diane Whitney

The HSO hosting program was created five years ago to foster a deeper sense of community between our musicians and audiences.

As many of our musicians travel significant distances to perform with the HSO, the hosting program paired out-of-town HSO musicians with community hosts who could offer housing while musicians came here to rehearse and perform in our many concert offerings including Masterworks, POPS!, education programs and more.

The Hosting Program was an instant success. We paired community members who had space to share (bedroom and private bathroom) with musicians in need of a safe space to practice, relax and prepare for a concert. Every musician is all too familiar with the stress of trying to rehearse in hotel rooms, fearful of disrupting guests in adjoining rooms, as well as the uncomfortable feelings of isolation and loneliness when you have no friends in a new community. The hosting program was the solution. We knew the program would build community and relationships, but we had no

idea then where those relationships would lead. Many unique stories have emerged and this is one more, a bright spot that reminds us of the importance of friendship.

Jeanne Wilson, piccolo/flute player with the Hartford Symphony, travels to Hartford from Riverdale, New York and was one of the first to sign up for the hosting program. We always pair musicians with multiple host families, as there are times when a hosting stay might not be convenient. Jeanne is the perfect guest, and the relationships with her several host families have bloomed into unshakeable bonds of friendship. Diane and Gary Whitney were one of Jeanne's first host families, and the bond was instantaneous. As Jeanne explains, "From the moment I walked through the door of their beautiful home, Diane and Gary made me feel at home and treated me as if I were a member of their family. Diane worked full-time, but Gary never complained about my many hours of daily piccolo practice." Diane, a baker, would often leave treats out for Jeanne with the note 'help yourself!'"

In the realm of small world coincidences, Jeanne's former flute teacher, Marjorie Shansky, who later became an attorney but still performs on flute, attended law school with Diane. When Jeanne and Marjorie found themselves performing in the same concert, they took a photo together, with a special message for Diane and Gary.

This year, Diane and Gary Whitney made the decision to sponsor a musician, and their choice was a natural. They immediately chose to



Marjorie Shansky(L) and Jeanne Wilson (R)

sponsor their friend, Jeanne Wilson.

What is a musician sponsorship? The opportunity to sponsor a musician is available to anyone who contributes to the Annual Fund on a consistent basis. Sponsorship involves a three-year commitment at the designated financial level associated with a particular musician. Benefits include an annual Musician Sponsor dinner for all sponsors and the sponsored musicians. Jeanne is the most recent HSO musician to be sponsored by a donor, and other currently sponsored musicians include Ann Drinan and Georgina Rossi (both violists), Gene Bozzi (principal timpanist), Barbara Hill (principal French Horn) Rick Rozie (principal bassist), and Leonid Sigal (concertmaster). Interested in finding out how you can create a special bond with a musician you admire? 

To learn more, contact
Ruth Sovronsky, Director of
Development, at 860-760-7321 or
rsovronsky@hartfordsymphony.org

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

A TRIBUTE TO LEGACY DONOR GEORGIA HERBERT DAY SILLIMAN

Brave. One-of-a-Kind. Positive. Fun-loving. Kathy Paulsen's description of her beloved Aunt "G", Georgia Silliman, is a tribute to the woman whose estate plans recently resulted in a generous gift to the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. We spoke with Kathy to learn more about her aunt, the quiet philanthropist in our midst, whose largess will help to sustain our symphony.



Georgia Silliman, born Georgia Herbert, grew up in Colorado. In the summer of 1943, she met a young army officer who was training at Camp Carson in Colorado. It was a whirlwind romance, and in November of that year, Georgia Herbert married George Herbert Day. They laughed because they already shared names: Georgia Herbert became Georgia Herbert Day, married to George Herbert Day. But World War II was raging. Within two months, Georgia's new husband was deployed to Italy. Tragically, George never returned to his bride. He died in Italy, in service of our country, leaving Georgia a young widow.

Upon losing his only son, George's father did something astonishing. He invited his daughter-in-law, a young woman he barely knew, to come to Connecticut so that he could assist her. Georgia's father-in-law, George Herbert Day, Jr., was a partner in the

well-known Hartford firm of Shipman & Goodwin, and Georgia accepted his kind offer of help so that she could complete the education she had put on hold to marry. Her father-in-law's belief in Georgia was not misplaced. Georgia became the first woman to receive an MBA from the University of Hartford, and ultimately, became a department head at Aetna.

Georgia thrived in her new state. In 1960, she bought a home at 107 Argyle Street in West Hartford and in 1964, 20 years after the passing of her first husband, she married her neighbor, John Silliman, an engineer who worked at Pratt & Whitney. John, the love of Georgia's adult life, was her partner until his premature death in 1984. Georgia and John built a life filled with art, family and adventure. They bought and renovated a house in Nantucket, which became the gathering place for both of their families. Georgia and John were talented artists. Georgia loved painting while John's work included sculpture and silk-screen. Together, they helped run the local ice-skating club (even judging some of the competitions) and were active in the West Hartford Art League. Georgia served as President of the West Hartford Art League and Treasurer of the Town and County Club. Even with declining vision from macular degeneration that ultimately left Georgia blind, she continued to paint until the age of 85.

Nothing held Georgia down. Despite a fall on the ice roughly 30 years before her death which damaged multiple vertebrae and caused her to lose about three inches in height, Georgia persevered. To the endless worry of her adoring family, she routinely climbed on ladders as she



continued to lovingly restore and maintain the Nantucket home she'd built with John. Never one to just "sit on a beach," Georgia loved fishing, sailing and spending every summer at the Nantucket house, inviting family members to join her as often as possible. Kathy recalled, "She loved to party and took joy in planning events. She was someone who lived by her own rules. She knew how to enjoy life." To the delight of the family, both of Georgia and John's residences, which were filled with joy and love during their lives, will remain in the family. One of Kathy's children bought the Nantucket residence and John's cousin bought the house on Argyle Street. The traditions Georgia created with John will endure. But that is only one of the legacies that Georgia created.

As much as Georgia's family knew about their aunt, they knew little about the many organizations she adored and supported and knew even less of the extensive philanthropic plans that were enunciated in her will. But in retrospect, Kathy was not surprised by her aunt's generosity or her love of music and the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. Her devotion to the arts and to the Hartford community matched everything Kathy knew about her aunt. Kathy's grandchildren now have the flute that their great-aunt "G" played as a young girl. 🎵

Thank you, Kathy, for sharing loving memories of your aunt. At the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, Georgia's thoughtful philanthropy will help continue her love of music, helping new generations discover the music that filled her heart and her homes.

THE ROBERTS FOUNDATION SELECTS THE HARTFORD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA FOR A NEW INITIATIVE

In December of 2020, the Edward C. & Ann T. Roberts Foundation announced the launch of a major initiative to support excellence and equity in the arts and selected three organizations to share a total award of \$500,000 over a period of two years: The Amistad Center for Art & Culture, Hartford Stage, and the Hartford Symphony Orchestra.

In response to the killing of George Floyd, the Roberts Foundation rededicated its efforts to invest in new and expanded programs that will advance racial equity in arts by increasing its investment in Black artists and all artists of color as well providing high quality arts experiences for students and families of color in the Greater Hartford area. The initiative was created to honor Joyce C. Willis, a former Board member of both the Roberts Foundation and the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, who tragically died of COVID-19 in June 2020.

“By committing substantial financial resources to this initiative, The Roberts Foundation is leveraging our genuine commitment to both excellence in the arts and racial equity to meet this moment and advance real change for the better,” said Olivia White, secretary of the Roberts Foundation. “The board is thrilled that we can support organizations that meant so much



Joyce C. Willis

to Joyce in their efforts to lift up Black artists and engage diverse audiences.”

Each organization will receive \$150,000 over two years and may apply for additional funding from a \$50,000 fund designated for ancillary programming. Thanks to the generous gift from The Roberts Foundation, in late 2021 the Hartford Symphony Orchestra will inaugurate an Educational Diversity Fellowship for student musicians of color and in addition, will engage a Black musician in residence to work with the orchestra and in the community.

The Amistad Center will establish a residency for an emerging or mid-career Black artist to create a new body of work which will culminate in a major exhibition in 2022. Hartford Stage will contract a Black director for a two-year residency who will work with other artists of color to create a powerful production for the theater’s main stage each year.

Lisa M. Curran, Executive Director of The Roberts Foundation, further explained: “The Joyce C. Willis Fund will not only serve as a catalyst to help Black artists excel in their careers, but also will encourage other organizations to examine their efforts to promote racial equity in the arts. We hope this initiative is the first step in encouraging local nonprofits embrace cultural change and increase their investment in artists of color.”

The Edward C. and Ann T. Roberts Foundation is a private, special purpose foundation founded in 1964 by Ned and Sunny Roberts. In accordance with its founders’ wishes, the foundation is dedicated to supporting and encouraging excellence in the arts throughout the Capital Region. Since its establishment, the foundation has awarded more than \$10 million to nearly 200 area non-profit organizations. **More information is available at www.therobertsfoundation.org.**

ENDNOTES:

¹ <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/florence-beatrice-smith-price-1742/>

² <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/02/05/the-rediscovery-of-florence-price>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/florence-beatrice-smith-price-1742/>

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ <https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/florence-price/>

¹¹ <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/florence-beatrice-smith-price-1742/>

¹² <https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/florence-price/>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/florence-beatrice-smith-price-1742/>



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