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Bach To Black

SUITES FOR PIANO, VOLUME II

Rochelle Sennet
piano

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
HARRY BURLEIGH
ULYSSES KAY
GEORGE WALKER
FLORENCE PRICE
MONTAGUE RING
JOYCE SOLOMON MOORMAN

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Disc 1

Johann Sebastian Bach*Partita No. 3 in A Minor, BWV 827*

1	Fantasia	[1:47]
2	Allemande	[2:51]
3	Corrente	[2:43]
4	Sarabande	[3:03]
5	Burlesca	[2:11]
6	Scherzo	[1:06]
7	Gigue	[3:09]

Ulysses Simpson Kay*Eight Inventions for Piano (1946)*

8	Allegro	[1:26]
9	Moderato	[2:24]
10	Andantino	[1:54]
11	Scherzando	[1:12]
12	Grave	[1:42]
13	Moderato	[1:49]
14	Larghetto	[2:05]
15	Presto	[1:30]

Johann Sebastian Bach*Partita No. 4 in D Major, BWV 828*

16	Ouverture	[5:41]
17	Allemande	[7:50]
18	Courante	[3:21]
19	Aria	[2:10]
20	Sarabande	[4:32]
21	Menuet	[1:32]
22	Gigue	[3:45]

Harry Thacker Burleigh*From the Southland Suite (1907)*

23	Through Moanin' Pines	[2:57]
24	The Frolic	[2:37]
25	In de Col' Moonlight	[2:24]
26	A Jubilee	[3:56]
27	On Bended Knees	[3:33]
28	A New Hiding-Place	[3:19]
Total Time = 78:45		

Disc 2

Johann Sebastian Bach*Partita No. 2 in C Minor, BWV 826*

1	Sinfonia	[4:08]
2	Allemande	[4:43]
3	Courante	[2:19]
4	Sarabande	[3:09]
5	Rondeaux	[1:40]
6	Capriccio	[3:40]

Florence Beatrice Price*Seven Descriptive Pieces (1927)*

7	Little Truants	[1:51]
8	Two Busy Little Hands	[1:23]
9	Hard Problems	[2:03]
10	Tittle Tattle	[1:07]
11	In Romance Land	[3:30]
12	Hilda's Waltz	[2:36]
13	Pensive Mood	[3:52]

Johann Sebastian Bach*Partita No. 5 in G Major, BWV 829*

14	Praeambulum	[2:22]
15	Allemande	[4:15]
16	Corrente	[1:43]
17	Sarabande	[4:14]
18	Tempo di Minuetta	[1:47]
19	Passepied	[1:40]
20	Gigue	[3:51]

Montague Ring*Carnival: Suite of Five Dances (1924)*

21	Cavalcade	[2:26]
22	Pierrette	[2:46]
23	Harlequin	[2:24]
24	Columbine	[2:45]
25	Frolic	[2:39]
Total Time = 69:08		

Disc 3

Johann Sebastian Bach*Partita No. 6 in E Minor, BWV 830*

1	Toccatà	[7:29]
2	Allemande	[3:23]
3	Corrente	[4:41]
4	Air	[1:19]
5	Sarabande	[5:52]
6	Tempo di Gavotta	[2:08]
7	Gigue	[6:01]

Joyce Solomon Moorman*Piano Suite (1974)*

8	Prelude	[0:23]
9	Grief	[0:55]
10	Three/Eight Meets Two/Eight	[0:16]
11	Introspection	[0:35]
12	Cross Rhythms	[0:40]
13	Verticals	[0:28]
14	Fugue	[1:19]
15	Afterthought	[0:16]
16	Toccatà	[0:44]

Johann Sebastian Bach*Partita No. 1 in B-Flat Major, BWV 825*

17	Praeludium	[1:51]
18	Allemande	[3:03]
19	Corrente	[2:50]
20	Sarabande	[4:42]
21	Menuet I and Menuet II	[2:45]
22	Gigue	[2:10]

George Theophilus Walker*Guido's Hand: Five Pieces for Piano (1986)*

23	I.	[1:26]
24	II.	[1:14]
25	III.	[3:05]
26	IV.	[1:56]
27	V.	[2:29]
Total Time = 64:13		

ABOUT BACH TO BLACK: SUITES FOR PIANO, VOLUME II

Bach to Black: Suites for Piano, Volume II, represents my continued interest in performing suites and multi-movement works by Black composers in combination with works of Johann Sebastian Bach. In addition to the works by Harry Burleigh, Ulysses Kay, and George Walker, this volume also includes the suites of three prominent Black women composers: Florence Price, Montague Ring (also known as Amanda Aldridge), and Joyce Solomon Moorman. I feel inspired by the many Black women who have continued to bring their individual voices to a multitude of spaces, including in Classical music. I am also grateful to the musicologists, historians, scholars, editors, performers, and teachers who work tirelessly to bring increased visibility and recognition to the music by Black composers.

As with the first volume of *Bach to Black: Suites for Piano*, I humbly state that there is much that has already been written about the Partitas for keyboard by J.S. Bach. A few brief remarks about J.S. Bach's Partitas: all six Partitas included in this three-disc set feature an opening movement, each with a different title: *Praeludium*, *Sinfonia*, *Fantasia*, *Ouverture*, *Praeambulum*, and *Toccata*, respectively. In addition, the following standard dances are also included: *Allemande* (slow German dance in duple meter), *Courante* or *Corrente* (faster French dance in triple meter), *Sarabande* (slower Spanish dance in triple meter), *Gigue* (quick English dance in triple meter), and additional dances: *Burlesca*, *Scherzo*, *Air/Aria*, *Menuet*, *Rondeaux*, *Gavotte*, and *Passepied*. The last movement of the second Partita features a *Capriccio* instead of a *Gigue*. Baroque composers such as J.S. Bach understood that the chosen key of the piece is meant to evoke certain emotions, and how tempo, meter, and style help to capture the essence of each individual dance. To this end, I have paired the sets as follows based on similarities in key, tonal center, rhythmic energy, and occasional disruption of tonal expectations:

Disc 1:

- a. J.S. Bach: Partita no. 3 in A Minor, BWV 827 / Ulysses Simpson Kay:
Eight Inventions for Piano (1946)
- b. J.S. Bach: Partita no. 4 in D Major, BWV 828 / Harry Thacker Burleigh:
From the Southland Suite (1907)

Disc 2:

- a. J.S. Bach: Partita no. 2 in C Minor, BWV 826 / Florence Beatrice Price:
Seven Descriptive Pieces (1927)
- b. J.S. Bach: Partita no. 5 in G Major, BWV 829 / Montague Ring: *Carnival: Suite of Five Dances* (1924)

Disc 3:

- a. J.S. Bach: Partita no. 6 in E Minor, BWV 830 / Joyce Solomon Moorman:
Piano Suite (1974)
- b. J.S. Bach: Partita no. 1 in B-Flat Major, BWV 825 / George Theophilus Walker:
Guido's Hand: Five Pieces for Piano (1986)

The targeted audience for the entire *Bach to Black* project: those who enjoy experiencing music by a variety of Black composers, those who enjoy the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, those have not yet been exposed to music of Black composers or J.S. Bach, and those who fall into more than one category. To the people I have spoken with through both informal and formal channels: I am thankful for the dialogue and to those who have taken the time to listen to Volume I. Classical music should not be just for a select group of people. My hope with this project is to show that music touches people in various ways, despite our differences.

In the liner notes that follow, I am focusing on discussion of the background and piano works by the composers of African descent. Note: Some may be triggered by the name "Bach," and others may be triggered by the word "Black." The goal is to honor the work of these remarkable composers and to encourage all to continue bringing wider ranges of audiences together. Now is the time to think creatively about programming of classical music concerts and recitals throughout the year. Thank you for listening! —*Rochelle Sennet*

ABOUT THE COMPOSERS OF AFRICAN DESCENT

Harry Thacker Burleigh (1866-1949)

American composer Harry Burleigh was born in Erie, Pennsylvania. He was trained at the National Conservatory of Music in New York, and was also a baritone and teacher. His style is representative of a combination of late-19th and early-20th century Romanticism, and it often includes influence from Black hymns and spirituals. Burleigh's music has often been compared to the music of his mentor, Antonín Dvořák. In fact, it was Burleigh who introduced Dvořák to Black hymns and spirituals. He later joined the voice faculty at the National Conservatory of Music, in addition to teaching voice privately. Burleigh composed works for piano, violin, voice, and chorus, and is considered one of the most prolific Black composers of his era. He received an honorary doctorate from Howard University in 1920.

Burleigh's *From the Southland* Suite is his only composition for solo piano. Composed in 1907, this suite showcases his early musical influences from the church as well as his lessons with Dvořák. The opening movement, "Through Moanin' Pines," is in F-sharp minor, and features a longing and somber melody in the right hand, accompanied by colorful harmonies in the other voices. The second movement, "Frolic," opens with a 'call and response' gesture. The unison four bars are the 'call,' which precede the chordal 'response.' Utilizing syncopation and tempo changes between sections, this movement showcases the composer's humorous, lyrical, and affinity for dance-like features employed by the composer. The third movement, "In de Col' Moonlight," one can find similarities to Frederic Chopin's Nocturne in F Minor, Op. 55, no. 1 with its somber nature and single-line melody. In the opening, Burleigh establishes a mysterious sentiment with the same minor key and with the shifting of chords. In addition, there is an incorporation of chromaticism, thereby creating more melancholy. The next movement, "A Jubilee," moves the listeners back to F major, and is strongly influenced by gospel hymns with the syncopated rhythms, rich harmonies, and imaginative cadences. The fifth movement, "On Bended Knees," is somewhat similar to Dvořák's Symphony no. 8 in G Major in terms of key, where the introduction is G minor, and later shifts to G major. Analogously, the G-minor opening of this movement by Burleigh introduces a melody suggestive of the cello sound in the left hand. After the opening thirteen bars, the music shifts to the Black spiritual, "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," in G Major. The movement then shifts back to the material from the G-minor opening before finally using snippets of the spiritual and concluding on a G-major chord. The final movement, "A New Hiding-Place," is in the glori-

ous key of D major and seems to signify a feeling of hopefulness and gratitude through the incorporation of the popular hymn "My Lord, What a Mornin'." This movement showcases the composer's grandiose and joyful style with lush harmonies and full chordal textures, bringing the work to a triumphant conclusion with the final *maestoso* section.

In the original edition, Louise Alston Burleigh, the composer's wife, wrote corresponding short poems, each of which were placed before the start of the individual movements. The following quotations use a form of vernacular which are essential to include, as it further gives the listener much to consider through the rhetoric and music.

I. "Through Moanin' Pines"

Along de desolate roads we pass

Thro' lonely pines and wither'd grass:—

De win' moans in de branches tall

An' a heavy sadness broods o'er all!

II. "The Frolic"

"Clean de ba'n an' sweep de flo'

Ring my banjo—Ring!

We's gwine dance dis ebenin' sho'

Sing my banjo—Sing!

All day long in de burnin' sun

We wuk'd an' toil'd, lost an' won

Now de ebenin' shadders come

Now de bendin' wuk is done!

Den come 'long Nancy—come 'long Sue

We'll dance down care de whol' night thoo."

III. "In De Col' Moonlight"

Just a tender heart repinin':—
 'Casèd—yet 'scapes its bindin'
And in mem'ry of a home
 Forgets it's not its own.

Toil on seeker—stumble, cry
 Never know de reason why!
Alone in de moonlight call to de sky
 Listen for de col' reply!

IV. "A Jubilee"

"Altho' you see me go 'long so,
 Ma spirit's boun' fo' de Hebbenly sho'
Gwine walk right up to de golden do'
 To ma home in de New Jerusalem!"

V. "On Bended Knees"

"Oh, I look away yonder—what do I see?
 A band of angels after me.
Come to tote me away from de fiel's all green
 'Cause nobody knows de trouble I've seen!"

VI. "A New Hiding-Place"

"My Lord, what a mornin'—
 When de stars begin to fall!
 * * * * *
De rocks an' de mountains shall all flee away;
 But you shall have a new hidin'-place dat day,"¹

Montague Ring (1866-1956)

British composer, teacher, and singer Montague Ring was born in Norwood, London as Amanda Ira Aldridge. She studied at the Royal College of Music from 1875 to 1877. Her father, Ira, was a prominent Shakespearean actor and was the first African American to play the role of Othello. Aldridge was also an activist and had connections to the growing movement of Pan-Africanism in the early 20th century. She had a very successful performing career as a singer until she began to battle a case of laryngitis. In addition, she was a vocal coach to many prominent singers, such as Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson. Aldridge has primarily composed works for piano, including seven suites, and several works for voice. Her works were published using her chosen pseudonym, Montague Ring.

Carnival is a five-movement suite which was published in 1924 and features characters inspired by Italian *commedia dell'arte*. *Commedia dell'arte* is a form of Italian theatre from the 16th and 17th centuries which many composers drew upon in their works (e.g. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Igor Stravinsky, Robert Schumann, etc.). Taking inspiration from this theatrical form, this suite includes the display of masked characters which were used to portray stereotypical traits of people from certain regions in Italy, which is reflected in the movements' titles. In addition to the virtuosic elements, such as octaves and double thirds, this work also displays a playful and dance-like character. At the time of this writing, an original copy of the score for *Carnival: Suite of Five Dances* can be found at the British Library in London, England.

The first movement of *Carnival*, "Cavalcade," portrays a processional opening with the parallel motion of the right hand. This theme of parallel movements, first occurring in the A section, returns throughout. The two contrasting sections utilize the keys of F major and A-flat major in a wonderful showcase of color changes. The second movement, "Pierrette," is a playful movement in E-flat major, related to the key of the first movement by the interval of a third. The composer's marking is "Allegretto con grazia, Tempo sempre rubato," encouraging the performer to exercise a bit of flexibility with the tempo throughout this dance. The third movement, "Harlequin," represents a masked character from the region of Bergamo. It opens in G major with a two-measure introduction before the main theme begins. The phrases are mostly in four bars, and the contrasting sections employs the keys of C major and E-Flat major. This playful character uses a light-hearted melody accompanied by syncopated left hand ostinato patterns throughout. The fourth movement, "Columbine," is in E-flat major, reflecting another thirds relationship from the opening movement key of C major. This slow movement is in ternary

form and includes the indication “Tempo molto lento e rubato.” Before the return of the A section, there is a short one-voice cadenza which conjures the feeling of operatic recitative, and allows for a bit more freedom for the performer to showcase its reflective nature. The final movement, “Frolic,” is a charming conclusion to this suite with frequent triplet figures in the right hand and dance rhythms in the left hand. The concluding bars restate the opening triplet motives with fuller textures and brings the work to an exciting conclusion with the thicker chords and an orchestral tremolo figure.

Florence Beatrice Price (1887-1953)

There have been several notable scholars who have been researching the life and works of Florence Price for decades — such as the late Dr. Rae Linda Brown — and it is encouraging to witness a renewed collective interest in her life, career, and music. In 2018, I had a wonderful opportunity to perform Florence Price’s *Concerto in One Movement* for piano and orchestra with the Prizm Ensemble in Memphis, Tennessee at the historic Clayborne Temple the day after the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King’s assassination. As one listens to her music — the beautiful harmonies, the memorable melodies, and compositional creativity — it is easy to see why this pioneer’s legacy is so admired and revered.

Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, Florence Price was a pianist, organist, teacher, and she composed a significant body of work during her lifetime, many of which were rediscovered in recent years. Her output includes compositions for piano, strings, organ, as well as orchestral, chamber, choral, and vocal works. She studied at the New England Conservatory in Boston, and later, the American Conservatory in Chicago. She has had her vocal works performed by notable singers such as Leontyne Price and Roland Hayes. In addition, the *Concerto in One Movement* for piano and orchestra was premiered by her student, pianist and composer Margaret Bonds. In 1934, Price became the first Black female composer to have her work premiered by a major symphony orchestra, the Women’s Symphony Orchestra of Chicago. She was on the faculty at Clark College in Atlanta, and she taught private piano in Little Rock and Chicago.

Seven Descriptive Pieces for Piano Solo was recently published by Peer Music Classical/Schirmer, Inc., and was edited by musicologist Dr. John Michael Cooper. All movements have two sets of suggested tempo markings, and Dr. Cooper consulted with pianists Jonathan Bellman and Maeve Brophy since there are no indications from Price herself. As stated by Dr. Cooper in his editorial notes: “The first

six pieces were written as a set between October 7 and October 26, 1927, while ‘Pensive Mood’ was written on March 3, 1928. Although all seven works bear descriptive titles and all are now found in the same folder in the Florence Price papers in Fayetteville, Arkansas, Price herself may not have grouped them together; the title *Seven Descriptive Pieces* is editorial.”²

The first movement, “Little Truants,” is in E-flat major, and is quite striking with its lovely and fluid harmonies. With the employing of double notes and delightful ornaments, it shows how Price’s style is reminiscent of the late-19th century. The second movement, “Two Busy Little Hands,” is deceptively tricky with its clear texture and intricate passagework. The outer sections, in C major, showcase a spirited and light-hearted charm. The middle section moves into E minor that makes for a nice harmonic change. The third movement, “Hard Problems,” shifts the listener back to the rich key of E-flat major, with more double notes and fuller chordal textures. This movement is also highly melodic and is in ABA form. The fourth movement, “Tittle Tattle,” is in 3/8 time, and displays a playful, scherzo-like character. The texture is transparent and is a lovely contrast from the previous movement. The fifth movement, “In Romance Land,” is a beautiful and songful piece, and it shows how even the lesser-complicated writing can often be the most exquisite. The sixth movement, “Hilda’s Waltz,” seems inspired by a late 19th-century waltz tradition with its imaginative harmonies and occasional chromaticism in combination with a very tonal structure. The final movement, “Pensive Mood,” is in C major and gives a feeling of an elaborate afterthought with its often-rhapsodic flair. The middle section goes into a “march” in A minor with lush modulation changes and chordal textures. The movement then returns to the material from the opening A section, bringing the entire work to a glorious conclusion.

Ulysses Simpson Kay (1917-1995)

American composer Ulysses Kay was born in Tucson, Arizona. In addition to earning degrees from University of Arizona and Eastman School of Music, he also pursued additional study with prominent composers Paul Hindemith and Otto Leuning. He received honorary doctorates from schools such as Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, University of Arizona, and Illinois Wesleyan University. Kay taught at City University of New York, Boston College, and University of California at Los Angeles. He worked in various genres including vocal, choral, orchestral, chamber, instrumental works, incidental music, and scores for film and television, including *New York, City of Magic* (1958), *Markings* (1966) for orchestra

and *Choral Triptych* (1962). He credited William Grant Still as one of his musical influences.³ This recording includes all of the original eight inventions of Ulysses Kay, and it is of interest that the *Eight Inventions* were later regrouped by the composer as *Four Inventions*.

Listening to all eight inventions by Kay, one can hear the influence of Paul Hindemith, who was a strong advocate of *Gebrauchsmusik* or “music for use.” One can also hear the innovative harmonies, captivating melodies, rhythmic motives, as well as a creative counterpoint. The first invention may remind the listener of J.S. Bach’s contrapuntal style seen in the two-part Invention no. 1 in C Major. This highly-spirited invention was later conceived as no. 4 of *Four Inventions*. The second invention, marked “Moderato,” was No. 1 of the *Four*, and is in G minor. This invention is reflective and lyrical, and explores different ways to utilize the primary six-note rhythmic motive throughout. The third invention displays a charming melody and harmonies. The primary motive is stated in the first opening measures with its moving eighth notes and dotted rhythm, and the work ends with the tonal center of A. The fourth invention became No. 2 of the *Four Inventions*, and is playful from the very onset. Utilizing the lower register in the opening phrase, there are a number of melodic leaps and sudden changes in dynamics in this invention. The fifth invention, marked “Grave,” begins with a majestic recitative opening. As the movement gradually builds up to the climax in the middle section, the work begins a gradual descent to a calm conclusion. The sixth invention is in 7/8 time, and shows a more subdued character. Also lyrical in nature, this movement gradually builds up with the right-hand passagework. The seventh invention, “Larghetto,” became No. 3 of the “Four Inventions.” This movement is striking with its use of legato and short ‘sigh’ motives, varying from two-to-five-note groupings. The final invention, indicated as “Presto,” features perpetual motion movement in 6/8 time. After the opening introduction, a short melodic motive is introduced in the right hand. The moving sixteenth notes continue and there is a lovely display of quickly-changing harmonies throughout the passagework, and the invention comes to an ending with a D-minor flourish.

George Theophilus Walker (1922-2018)

It would have been impossible to conceive of this *Bach to Black* project without including George Walker, one of the first Black composers whose music I came across as an undergraduate student in college. Dr. Walker received a Bachelor of Music in piano with highest honors from Oberlin College in Ohio,

an Artist Diploma in piano and composition from Curtis Institute of Music, and a piano diploma from the Fontainebleau School in France. He also earned the Doctor of Musical Arts degree and the Artist Diploma in piano from Eastman School of Music in New York. He studied piano with renowned teachers such as Rudolf Serkin, Clifford Curzon, and Robert Casadesu, and composition with composers such as Rosario Scalero and Nadia Boulanger. He taught at several institutions such as Rutgers University in New Jersey, the Peabody Institute in Maryland, and the University of Delaware. In 1996, Dr. Walker became the first Black composer to win a Pulitzer Prize in Music for his work *Lilacs for Soprano or Tenor and Orchestra*. Walker received prestigious awards such as the Guggenheim Fellowship, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and was also awarded honorary doctorates from schools such as Curtis Institute and Montclair State University in New Jersey. He composed instrumental compositions for strings, clarinet, piano, organ, as well as chamber, choral, vocal, and orchestral works. His middle and late style reflects one of his primary musical aims: to “obliterate tonality.”⁴

As stated in the score’s program notes, *Guido’s Hand: Five Pieces for Piano*, composed in 1986 and published in 1987, “invokes the memory of Guido d’Arezzo, who was associated with the sight-singing technique of the movable ‘do’ system.”⁵ This piece was commissioned by Affiliate Artists, Inc, and was dedicated to his sister, Frances Walker-Slocum, renowned pianist, organist, and pedagogue. A few features to observe in all five movements: all notes are utilized equally, and these movements have a wide range of disjunct melodies and unpredictable intervals, combined with moments of intensity and lighter sections. Each movement is marked with a Roman numeral and metronome indication. The first movement, with its slow tempo, opens with mysterious left-hand notes, followed by the other voices immediately entering. The dissonant chords along with melodic leaps sets the tone for what will follow in later movements. Next, the elements of unpredictability and virtuosity are what are striking in the second movement of this work. Opening with rapid triplet figures, Walker also employs various registers and frequent accents throughout. In the third movement, there is the element of the unexpected with the lack of meter and tempo changes between larger sections. Also using frequent triplet figures, this technically-challenging movement uses octaves, quick gestures, and long-note values at sections throughout. The fourth movement showcases a playful character at the opening, then switches to a more powerful sound after the fourth measure. There are several cadenza-like flourishes occurring, and it ends with an intense passage which culminates with an extended trill in the upper register. In the final

movement, there is a return to the triplet figure. There is further development which exploits the various registers of the keyboard. In the final six measures, there is a return to the similar opening material seen in the first movement, thus emphasizing the cyclical nature of the composition.

Joyce Solomon Moorman (b. 1946)

Dr. Joyce Solomon Moorman, American composer, was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, and her childhood was spent in Columbia, South Carolina. She earned the Bachelor of Arts degree from Vassar College, the Master of Arts in Teaching degree from Rutgers University, the Master of Fine Arts degree from Sarah Lawrence College, and the Doctor of Education degree from Columbia University. In addition to composing works for piano, she has also written chamber music and compositions for flute, cello, voice, percussion, chorus, orchestra, as well as electronic music, and one opera. She has been commissioned by the Plymouth Chorus and Orchestra of Minneapolis, Minnesota the Cygnus Chamber Ensemble, Turn On The Music of New Jersey, Louise Toppin (soprano), and Vienna Modern Masters. Dr. Moorman was a winner of the 1998 Vienna Modern Masters Millennium Commission Competition. She also received a performance award in the Andy Warhol Composers' Competition sponsored by the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in August 2000. She is included in Helen Walker-Hill's *Black Women Composers: A Century of Piano Music* (Hildegard, 1992), *Piano Music by Black Women Composers: A Catalogue of Solo and Ensemble Works* (Greenwood Press, 1992), and *Music by Black Women Composers: A Bibliography of Available Scores* (Center for Black Music Research, 1995). In 1997, she was appointed by the Governor of New York to the Advisory Music Panel for the New York State Council on the Arts, on which she served on for three years. She previously held the rank of Professor in the Music and Art Department at Borough of Manhattan Community College for many years. Her compositions have been performed by Triad Chorale, Wilson Moorman, LonGar Ebony Ensemble, the Woodhill Chamber Ensemble, the Brooklyn Philharmonic Chamber Ensemble, the Plymouth Chorus and Orchestra, the Cygnus Chamber Ensemble, the Moravian Philharmonic, the Afro-American Chamber Music Society of Los Angeles, the Richmond County Orchestra, and Louise Toppin.

Dr. Moorman has had many musical influences along her compositional career. While in the master's degree program at Rutgers University, Dr. Moorman took her first composition class from Robert Moevs, where he taught a method of composition based on sets of intervals. Two years later,

she pursued a master's in music composition at Sarah Lawrence College, where Meyer Kupferman's first assignment was to write five piano pieces, and Moorman composed the Piano Suite.⁶ This work is somewhat reminiscent of Anton Webern's musical characteristics of brevity and economy in motives, as seen in his *Variations for Piano*, Op. 27. What makes Dr. Moorman's style so unique is her incorporation of twelve-tone features, along with colorful employment of chromatic and imitative textures, and innovative rhythmic and melodic motives. This work brilliantly captures the series of brief thoughts and impressions. The opening "Prelude" utilizes a particular rhythmic motive along with a short melody and is a wonderful introduction to the rhythms, textures, and motives that will follow in subsequent movements. The second movement, "Grief," has a 'sigh' two-note motive which first occurs at the very opening. Silence plays a role in further adding to the somber mood. Next, "Three/Eight meets Two/Eight" displays a scherzo-like character and quickly segues into the next movement. "Introspection," the fourth piece of the set, is a slow Adagio which continues the feeling of an unanswered question. The fifth movement, "Cross Rhythms," has a variety of rhythms between the two hands, such as 3 against 4 as well as 4 against 5. "Verticals," the sixth movement, has a mixture of chords which are highly dissonant in nature and reflects of range of colors and dynamic levels. The seventh movement, "Fugue," is in three voices, and has a one-measure subject starting in the soprano voice. Using triplet figures and often-disjunct movement of the voices creates a dramatic chordal ending. The eighth movement, "Afterthought," shows motives seen in the previous Fugue. Finally, the "Toccata," brings the suite to an exciting conclusion with repeated figures and colorful chords.

¹ Joseph Smith, ed., *Four Early 20th Century Piano Suites by Black Composers* (New York, N.Y.: Schirmer, Inc., 1997), 78.

² Florence Price, *Seven Descriptive Pieces for Piano Solo*. Michael Cooper, ed. (New York, N.Y.: Schirmer, Inc., 2021), ii.

³ David N. Baker, Lida M. Belt, and Herman Hudson, eds., *The Black Composer Speaks* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1978), 141.

⁴ Correspondence with the composer, December 2007.

⁵ George Walker, *Guido's Hand: Five Pieces for Piano* (Maryland Heights, MO: Lauren Keiser Music Publishing, 2008), 2.

⁶ Correspondence with the composer, January 2022.

ABOUT THE PERFORMER

Dr. Rochelle Sennet has established herself as a well-known performer, teacher, and scholar. Her recital programs showcase her versatility at the keyboard, with frequent performances of repertoire by Johann Sebastian Bach and African American composers such as H. Leslie Adams, Jeffrey Mumford, James Lee III, and Pulitzer Prize-winning composer George Walker. She received the Bachelor of Music degree from San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the Master of Music degree from University of Michigan, Artist Diploma from Texas Christian University, and the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from University of Illinois. She was co-winner for the Krannert Center Debut Artist Competition, national finalist at the MTNA Steinway & Sons Young Artist piano competition, and a prize winner in numerous competitions such as the Kingsville International Piano competition, San Antonio Tuesday Musical Club Piano Competition, and the US Open Music Piano Concerto Competition. She currently serves as an Associate Professor of Piano in the School of Music, and is also the inaugural Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the College of Fine and Applied Arts at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

In 2021, she released *Bach to Black: Suites for Piano*, which includes the complete English Suites of Johann Sebastian Bach and six additional suites by five Black composers: Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, R. Nathaniel Dett, H. Leslie Adams, Frederick Tillis, and Jeffrey Mumford. The three-disc recording earned a Gold Medal from Global Music Awards. Her first solo recording, titled *Alkebulan's Son: The Solo Piano Works of James Lee III*, was also previously released on Albany Records, and garnered critical acclaim. Her recording of George Walker's Piano Concerto with Sinfonia Varsovia in Poland was released in 2012. She also recorded eighteenth-century composer Leopold Kozeluch's Piano Concerto no. 2 and three harpsichord sonatas for four-hands with the Classical Chamber Players, which was released on the Mark Records label. In addition, her duo's debut recording, *Gathering Shatters*, was released in 2018 on Albany Records.

Recent performances include solo appearances at the Four Seasons Arts in Berkeley, California, Nizhny Novgorod State Conservatory in Russia, Eastman School of Music in Rochester, Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and University of Memphis. She performed Samuel Barber's Piano Concerto with the Blue Lake Festival Orchestra in Michigan, which was broadcast live on WBLV-Blue Lake Public Radio. She gave the world premiere of James Lee III's Concerto for Piano and Winds with the Morgan State University Symphonic Band in Baltimore, Maryland.

She has also made guest appearances as a soloist with ensembles such as Prizm Ensemble in Tennessee, Salisbury Symphony Orchestra in Maryland, University Philharmonia Orchestra in Michigan, the Sewanee Festival Orchestra in Tennessee, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Orchestra. She performed Etude Fantasy by Oscar-winning composer John Corigliano at the University of Illinois concert, in which the composer was in attendance and praised her performance. As an accomplished chamber performer, she was a co-founder of Duo MemDi, a piano-violin duo established in 2010 with Russian international violin performer Igor Kalnin, on the principles of diversity and performing works by memory, a rarity in the field of chamber music. Recent Duo MemDi performances have included appearances throughout the United States, Central Asia, and Europe. As a committed scholar and educator, Dr. Sennet has also presented frequent guest lectures, masterclasses, and clinics. She is also an avid advocate for outreach performances, and is in demand as an adjudicator at numerous piano competitions.

