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Teacher Guide

The Legacy of Florence B. Price

Free School Concerts (Virtual Edition)–Fall 2020

oslmusic.org/event/the-legacy-of-florence-b-price/

**LIVING
Music** 2020 - 2021 Season

Welcome to the Teacher Guide!

This fall 2020, we look forward to your school communities joining Orchestra of St. Luke's for our virtual concert—*Music in Color: The Legacy of Florence B. Price*. This performance will include music, story-telling, and interactive opportunities for your students as they are introduced to the trailblazing composer Florence Price (1899–1952), the first African American woman to have her music played by a major American orchestra. This guide features activities and background information focused on both the music featured in the concert, as well as Price's life story. Each **Activity** is designed specifically for student work (implemented by the teacher or adult facilitator). Information geared toward the teacher's own learning is labeled **Background for Teachers** at the beginning of each new Activity.

Each Activity highlights an important idea, theme, or musical concept that will be incorporated into the online concert. Engaging students in several Activities before the concert supports young listeners as they create their own personal connections to Florence Price's music; these connections will in turn promote engaged and focused listening during the performance as well as help lead to a more meaningful concert experience for all. Also included in the guide is an additional **Post-Concert Reflection** activity to aid students in synthesizing the learning that was part of preparing for and attending the performance.

While Activities are generally written for a target student age range of 8–14, they can be adapted or expanded for a broader range of learners.

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About Florence B. Price

- Florence Beatrice was born on April 9, 1887, in Little Rock, Arkansas. Her family was well-known in their community; her father was a prominent dentist and her mother was an accomplished musician, teacher, and businesswoman.
- As a child, Florence demonstrated her love of music at a very early age. She gave her first public piano recital when she was just four years old.
- When Florence was young, Little Rock was a progressive city full of interesting artistic, political, intellectual, and cultural events—making it an exciting place for her to grow up.
- Her first music composition was published when she was only 11.
- When she was 16, she moved to Boston to study at the New England Conservatory where she was an ambitious and hard-working student. She graduated three years later, the only student in her class to earn two degrees: one in organ and another in piano, all while studying composition, too!
- After graduating college, she taught music at schools and colleges in both Arkansas and Georgia.
- Price married a lawyer and started a family back in Little Rock. While her two daughters were young, she still taught piano lessons from home and continued composing.
- In 1927, Price decided to leave Little Rock and move north with her family to Chicago. Because of increased hostility and unjust practices aimed at Black people—including the implementation of Jim Crow laws that enforced racial segregation—Little Rock was no longer the safe and exciting city of her childhood.
- Price used her musical skills to support her family in many different ways. She taught piano and composition, composed radio jingles and popular songs, and even played live organ soundtracks for silent films in movie theaters.



*Price as a Young Woman,
University of Arkansas Archives*

- In 1932, Price won the prestigious Wanamaker Music Contest for her Symphony in E minor. Not only did she get a large cash prize, but it also brought her music to the attention of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. They played her Symphony in E minor the next year, making Price the first Black woman composer to have a piece performed by a major American orchestra.



Chicago Symphony Archives

- Many famous musicians performed Price's music, especially her songs for voice and piano. In particular, she became close to singer Marian Anderson who sang Price's arrangement of a Black-American spiritual during an important concert at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Anderson also sang Price's music at Carnegie Hall!
- Price was dedicated to creating her own unique style of music. She combined European traditions with music from her own background as a Black woman from the American South, often using rhythms and melodies inspired by Black folk songs, Spirituals, and dances, including the energetic Juba.
- During her lifetime, Price composed around 300 pieces of music! She continued as an active musician—playing piano, organ, and composing—up until her death in 1953.



Marian Anderson at the Lincoln Memorial



Florence Price at the Piano, University of Arkansas Libraries

Activity 1

Reinventing Traditional Songs

Lesson Time: 45 min.

Materials Needed: Student worksheet, device to play or share streamed song links

Age Range: Grades 1-12

Music in Focus: “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”

Background for Teachers

Price said in a letter from 1943 petitioning the conductor of the Boston Symphony Serge Koussevitzky to consider programming her music: “Having been born in the South and having spent most of my childhood there, I believe I can truthfully say that I understand the real [Black] music. In some of my work, I make use of the idiom undiluted. Again, at other times it merely flavors my themes. And at still other times thoughts come in the garb of the other side of my mixed racial background. I have tried for practical purposes to cultivate and preserve a facility of expression in both idioms, although I have an unwavering and compelling faith that a national music very beautiful and very American can come from the melting pot just as the nation itself has done.”

As she describes, Price masterfully blended her many sources of inspiration to create a distinctive style of music. Sometimes she incorporates elements of Southern Black musical traditions in subtle ways, but Price was also unafraid to proudly quote or arrange traditional songs, especially Spirituals. One of her most famous Spiritual settings was of “My Soul’s Been Anchored in the Lord,” sung frequently by the iconic contralto Marian Anderson. This piece was featured in Anderson’s historical performance in front of the Lincoln Memorial in 1939.

Price also composed a piece for string quartet (two violins, viola, and cello) called *Five Folksongs in Counterpoint* that features reimaginings of several folk songs and Spirituals, including two that will be featured in the concert: “Shortnin’ Bread” and “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.”

1. Learning “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”

Get to know the traditional Spiritual “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.” Have students practice singing the chorus to this traditional song.

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the chorus of the spiritual "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot". The music is written in 4/4 time on a single treble clef staff. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the notes: "Swing low, sweet cha - ri - ot, co - min' for to car - ry me home. Swing low, sweet cha - ri - ot, co - min' for to car - ry me home." The first staff ends with a double bar line, and the second staff continues the melody and lyrics.

2. Listening to Multiple Interpretations

Listen to 2–3 short excerpts from the below interpretations of “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.” Compare and contrast them, and chart of some of the musical differences between each version:



1A. Fisk Jubilee Singers (0’00”–0’24”): <https://youtu.be/GUvBGZnL9rE>

2A. Beyoncé (0’30”–1’03”): <https://youtu.be/gryfRoqbu4c?t=32>

3A. Louis Armstrong (Trumpet solo, 0’23”–1’01”): https://youtu.be/MVGkJFOlw_s?t=23

To support focused and critical listening, encourage your students to write notes as they listen to each example in Student Worksheet 1 (found on page 17). Some sample responses are included in the chart below.

	Fisk Jubilee Singers	Beyoncé	Louis Armstrong
Singers/Instruments <i>How many people are performing “Swing Low”? Is their voice high or low-pitched? What kind of instrument(s)?</i>	A low-pitched voice sings the main melody. A choir/many people join in after a few seconds.		Trumpet plays the melody. There’s a regular drum beat in the background to keep it steady.
Melody <i>Does the performer sing the plain melody, or do they change it by adding or subtracting notes?</i>		Singer stretches out parts of the melody and repeats some of the words. She decorates the melody by adding new notes.	
Tempo/Speed <i>How fast or slow does the performer go? Do Is there a regular beat, or do the stretch the melody out?</i>	Medium tempo	A little slower than the Fisk singers	
Articulation <i>Does the performer sing in a smooth way, or choppy way?</i>		Very smooth singing	Trumpet notes are a little shorter/choppier than when singers sing.
Volume/Dynamics <i>How loud or soft is the performance? Does it change?</i>		Everything gets louder when the choir joins Beyoncé.	

3. Experimenting with the Melody

Let students know that Florence Price wrote a piece for string quartet where each instrument (violins, viola, and cello) has a chance to play the “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” melody in its own unique way.

Experiment with singing the melody in a variety of ways, encouraging students to make musical choices to create their own versions. Some possibilities for ways to vary the melody might include:

- Singing in a higher or lower range
- Changing articulation: making it very smooth, choppy, scratchy, etc.
- Trying to create a particular mood: serious, calm, lively, goofy, etc.
- Singing at different dynamic, or volume, levels

Reflect with your students.

- *What were some ways we were able to make new versions of “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”?*
- *What are some other ways an instrument might be able to play this melody in a unique way?*

4. Listening to Florence Price’s “Swing Low” Version.

Listen to excerpts from Florence Price’s “Swing Low, Suite Chariot,” and discuss how she made each new section unique.



4A. Excerpt 1: <https://soundcloud.com/user-317358886/4a-swing-low-excerpt-1/s-SeR7kZuKaMZ?in=user-317358886/sets/osls-the-legacy-of-florence-price-activity-1/s-a3WdCI3ybRF>
Viola plays the melody while the rest of the quartet plays fast notes that decorate the main tune.

4B. Excerpt 2: <https://soundcloud.com/user-317358886/4b-swing-low-excerpt-2/s-YMgloA3EVh3?in=user-317358886/sets/osls-the-legacy-of-florence-price-activity-1/s-a3WdCI3ybRF>
The violin plays only the first part of the melody, and then the music is taken over by exciting, quick, short notes from the other string instruments.

4C. Excerpt 3: <https://soundcloud.com/user-317358886/4c-swing-low-excerpt-3/s-tyfcns7e6yY?in=user-317358886/sets/osls-the-legacy-of-florence-price-activity-1/s-a3WdCI3ybRF>
Cello playing melody, but it’s turned upside-down!

4D. Excerpt 4: <https://soundcloud.com/user-317358886/4d-swing-low-excerpt-4/s-fJLogCcvHC2?in=user-317358886/sets/osls-the-legacy-of-florence-price-activity-1/s-a3WdCI3ybRF>
Violin is playing very high, with lots of shaking string sounds in the background.

Activity 2

Inspired by Poetry

Lesson Time: 30 min.

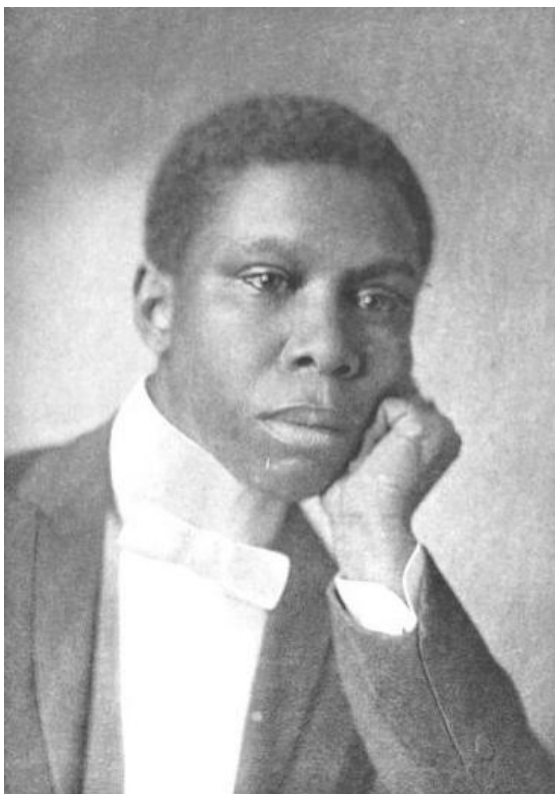
Materials Needed: Student worksheets (written poetry)

Age Range: Grades 5-12

Music in Focus: “Sympathy” and “Hold Fast to Dreams”

Background for Teachers

Several of Price’s compositions were based on traditional Spirituals or folksongs—however, she also found inspiration for composing her own original music in the texts of other Black artists, often those working and writing during her own lifetime. Two songs featured in the concert include poetry by Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1907) and Langston Hughes (1901–1967). “Sympathy” draws on Dunbar’s poem of the same name, a work perhaps made even more famous by Maya Angelou’s use of the poem’s last line—“I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”—as the title for her autobiography. Price set Hughes’s brief but striking poem “Dreams” to music in her own song titled “Hold Fast to Dreams.”



Paul Laurence Dunbar



Langston Hughes

1. Reading Poems

Examine the poetry Price used as lyrics for her songs. Choose one of the poems below (or both) and share copies with students. (See Student Worksheet 2 on page 18.) Read the poem aloud together, highlighting or underlining important moments or phrases, and work together to clarify the poem's meaning. Reflect on each poem using questions like those below.

“Dreams” by Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

“Sympathy” by Paul Laurence Dunbar

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
And the river flows like a stream of glass;
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting—
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—
When he beats his bars and he would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—
I know why the caged bird sings!

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean to “hold fast” to something?
- Why do you think the author feels it is important to hold fast to dreams?

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean to feel “sympathy” for someone or something? Why might the author feel sympathy for the caged bird?
- What are some experiences or situations that might make someone feel trapped or stuck, like a caged bird? What are some ways of working or struggling against those trapped situations?

2. Making Musical Predictions

After discussing the text of either poem, extend the conversation to make some predictions about Price's music:

- What kinds of emotions or feelings do you hear in this text?
- Why might Price have been drawn to this poem? (Refer to Price's timeline on p. 3 to for deeper connection to this question.)
- What kind of music would match the feeling and mood of these words? How do you imagine the voice would sound as it sang the words?
- What could musical instruments do in the background to help support the meaning of the words?
- How might the mood or feeling of the music change during parts of the poetry?

Activity 3

Emphasizing Rhythm

Lesson Time: 35 min.

Materials Needed: device to play or share streamed song links

Age Range: Grades 3–12

Music in Focus: “Juba” from String Quartet No. 2

Background for Teachers

Part of Price’s unique musical voice was her deep commitment to incorporating ideas and themes from Black American musical traditions into her compositions. In addition to her original settings and arrangements of traditional Spirituals explored earlier in this guide, another way Price wove music from her Southern Black heritage into her pieces was through the use of the Juba rhythm and dance. With roots in the Kingdom of Kongo (modern day Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola), the Juba in the United States continued to evolve through the antebellum era, even influencing vaudevillian song and dance. In her piano works, Price showcased the Juba’s energetic syncopated off-beats as well as its intricately layered rhythms. In her symphonies and chamber works, Price used the Juba to update and personalize the tradition of including a dance-inspired third movement: rather than write a European scherzo or minuet, she composed Juba dances instead. Describing her use of the Juba and its distinctive elements, Price said: “In all types of [Black] music, rhythm is of preeminent importance. In the dance, it is a compelling, onward sweeping force that tolerates no interruption.”

1. Juba’s History

Share the below brief history of Juba with students. Students can read the below paragraph.

The Juba is both a rhythm and a dance, originating in Africa—in what was once known as the Kingdom of Kongo. When many people from this region were taken from their land to be enslaved and forced to work on American plantations, these traditions traveled with them. While many of enslaved peoples’ music included drumming, American slave owners (and in many cases governments) forbade them from using drums because they were afraid they could be used to carry coded messages. So, instead of using drums, the musicians and dancers began to show the rhythms of the Juba with their bodies—by clapping, stomping, tapping their chest, and slapping their legs. Each new generation would learn these rhythms by ear. After a while, a popular version of the dance was called “Pattin’ Juba” and sometimes, “Hambone.”

2. Comparing and Contrasting Recordings

Show your class these two different interpretations of a Juba rhythm, and compare and contrast. As students listen, encourage them to quietly nod their heads with whatever beat they feel when they hear percussive sounds.



5A. Sweet Honey in the Rock’s “Juba”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAMTH8nj-dI>

The full Juba rhythm starts at 2’16”, but there’s an informative and musical introduction that contextualizes the song.

Ask students for some initial observations before listening to the second example.



6A. “Patting Juba” from *From Ear to Ear*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Go8R30rfsM>
(0’00”–0’44”)

What do these two recordings have in common? Some possible answers:

- Both have the same lyrics: “Juba this and Juba that, Juba killed a yellow cat,” etc.
- Both have clapping/patting sounds.
- Both are sung by a group of people.

What are some differences between the two recordings? Some possible answers:

- Version A (i.e., 5A) is faster than Version B (i.e., 6A).
- The second version (6A) is like a chant, with everyone singing the same pitches. Sweet Honey in the Rock sings more harmonies.
- Version A has everyone singing together; Version B is a call and response.

Explain to your students that this rhythm has been used in many different kinds of music; other versions of American Juba were played on the banjo.

Watch the next video, where musician and storyteller Súle Greg Wilson plays Juba on the banjo.



7A. Súle Greg Wilson Juba on the banjo (with short patting introduction) (1'33”):

<https://youtu.be/aYOhW-eArvE?t=93>

Possible reflection questions:

- How does this banjo version differ from the two clapping/patting versions we heard before?
- When you hear this new version, do you think the banjo sounds more like a drum, or a human voice?

Take a Deeper Dive: Learn “Pattin’ Juba” with Súle Greg Wilson (Note: to learn along with the video, you may want to replay the opening at 2’35” several times).



8A. <https://youtu.be/aYOhW-eArvE?t=154>

3. Florence Price’s “Juba”

Tell your students that Florence Price was inspired by Juba and wanted to acknowledge African American history in her modern compositions. She took elements of Juba rhythms and made new melodies out of them. Play for your class the below audio excerpt of OSL’s string quartet performing Florence Price’s piece, titled “Juba.” Listen to the excerpt 2–3 times, and encourage listeners to nod their heads, or even pat quietly along, when they hear parts that remind them of the historic Juba rhythm.



9A. Florence Price’s “Juba” (Excerpt): <https://soundcloud.com/user-317358886/florence-prices-juba-excerpt/s-PP4vg4lfUuU>

Possible reflection questions:

- Unlike some of the historic Juba examples we heard, Florence Price’s Juba has no words—if you were going to make up words to go along with Florence Price’s “Juba”, what would they be about?
- What do you think a string player would need to do to sound more like a percussion instrument?

Additional Resources for Exploring Juba and Hambone



10A. Danny “Slapjazz” Barber: <https://youtu.be/6BCzljY-taY>

This link contains historical content that may not be appropriate for all classrooms.

11A. Derique McGhee: <https://youtu.be/PLmySQ5CuY0>

12A. Calvin Jackson and Marcus James: <https://youtu.be/gTKE3laVVmA>

13A. Stephen McCraven: <https://youtu.be/v8r5wxpa3hg>

Meet the Performers



Orchestra of St. Luke's

Learn More : <https://oslmusic.org/about-osl/about-orchestra-of-st-lukes-osl/>



Kirya Traber, Actor and Playwright

Learn More: <https://oslmusic.org/bios/kirya-traber/>



Jasmine Muhammad, Soprano

Learn More: <https://oslmusic.org/bios/jasmine-muhammad/>



Súle Greg Wilson, Drummer and Folklorist

Learn More: <https://oslmusic.org/bios/sule-greg-wilson/>

Tips for Audience Members

Great Performers + Great Audiences = Great Concerts

Below are five key elements for being a great audience:

Give me Five



1. Eyes are watching

2. Ears are listening



3 Lips are closed

4. Hands are still



5. Brain is ON

Here are some additional tips for new concert goers:

- Even though this concert is happening on a screen instead of a stage, we still encourage you to engage with the musicians and actors! There will be moments when you're all invited to make music along with the performers.
- Listening Strategies:
 - Sometimes, try listening to one instrument at a time. *What is the cello playing? What about the viola?*
 - During other moments, think big-picture and listen the ensemble as a whole.
- After each piece ends, live audiences normally give the performers a round of applause. Give a clap for the OSL musicians and guest artists to send good energy their way!

Post-Concert Reflection

Following the concert, lead a class conversation, have students discuss in small groups, or invite students to journal individually based on questions like those below:

What are some things about Price's music—sounds, ideas, inspirations—that stood out to you? What do you think makes Price's music unique or special? How would you describe Price's music to someone who hadn't heard of her before?

How might some of the challenges Price faced have had an effect on her music? How might they have made her life as a composer more difficult? How might they have inspired her?

How could Price's music inspire someone living today?

Consider extending the reflection process an activity like one of the following:

- Write imaginary letters to Florence Price in which students highlight aspects of her artistry and life story they found most compelling.
- Have students look for their own inspiration in songs and poems—from contemporary artists, artists who inspired Price, or Price herself. Invite students to create their own artistic responses: another song or poem, a piece of visual art, a dance, etc.
- Create an "About Florence Price" bulletin board, pamphlet, or PowerPoint presentation to share Price's music and story with other classes.

Index of Audio/Video Links

Activity 1

Listening to Multiple Interpretations of “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”



1A. Fisk Jubilee Singers

YouTube (0'00"–0'24"): <https://youtu.be/GUvBGZnL9rE>

2A. Beyoncé

YouTube (0'30"–1'03"): <https://youtu.be/gryfRoqbu4c?t=32>

3A. Louis Armstrong

YouTube (Trumpet solo, 0'23"–1'01"): https://youtu.be/MVGkJFOlw_s?t=23

Listening to Florence Price’s “Swing Low” Version



4A. Excerpt 1

Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/user-317358886/4a-swing-low-excerpt-1/s-SeR7kZuKaMZ?in=user-317358886/sets/osls-the-legacy-of-florence-price-activity-1/s-a3WdCl3ybRF>

4B. Excerpt 2

Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/user-317358886/4b-swing-low-excerpt-2/s-YMgloA3EVh3?in=user-317358886/sets/osls-the-legacy-of-florence-price-activity-1/s-a3WdCl3ybRF>

4C. Excerpt 3

Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/user-317358886/4c-swing-low-excerpt-3/s-tyfcns7e6yY?in=user-317358886/sets/osls-the-legacy-of-florence-price-activity-1/s-a3WdCl3ybRF>

4D. Excerpt 4

Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/user-317358886/4d-swing-low-excerpt-4/s-fJLogCcvHC2?in=user-317358886/sets/osls-the-legacy-of-florence-price-activity-1/s-a3WdCl3ybRF>

Activity 3

Examples of Juba



5A. Sweet Honey in the Rock’s “Juba”

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAMTH8nj-dl>

6A. “Patting Juba” from *From Ear to Ear*

YouTube (0'00–0'44"): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Go8R30rfsM>

7A. Sùle Greg Wilson Juba on the banjo (with short patting introduction)

YouTube (1'23"–2'28"): <https://youtu.be/aYOhW-eArvE?t=93>

8A. Learn “Pattin’ Juba” with Sùle Greg Wilson

YouTube (2'36"–3'44"): <https://youtu.be/aYOhW-eArvE?t=154>

Florence Price’s “Juba”



9A. Florence Price’s “Juba” (Excerpt)

Soundcloud: <https://soundcloud.com/user-317358886/florence-prices-juba-excerpt/s-PP4vg4IfUuU>

Additional Resources for Exploring Juba and Hambone



10A. Danny “Slapjazz” Barber

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/6BCzljY-taY>

11A. Derique McGhee

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/PLmySQ5CuY0>

12A. Calvin Jackson and Marcus James

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/gTKE3laVVmA>

13A. Stephen McCraven

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/v8r5wxpa3hg>

“Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”

Listening to Different Interpretations

Listen to some different versions of “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.” What makes each performance unique? Write notes below as you listen to each musical artist.

	Fisk Jubilee Singers	Beyoncé	Louis Armstrong
Singers/ Instruments <i>How many people are performing “Swing Low”? Is their voice high or low-pitched? What kind of instrument(s)?</i>			
Melody <i>Does the performer sing the plain melody, or do they change it by adding or subtracting notes?</i>			
Tempo/Speed <i>How fast or slow does the performer go? Is there a regular beat, or do they stretch the melody out?</i>			
Articulation <i>Does the performer sing in a smooth way, or choppy way?</i>			
Volume/ Dynamics <i>How loud or soft is the performance? Does it change?</i>			

Florence Price's Poetic Inspiration

“Dreams” by Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

“Sympathy” by Paul Laurence Dunbar

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
And the river flows like a stream of glass;
 When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing
 Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
 And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting—
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
 When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—
When he beats his bars and he would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
 But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—
I know why the caged bird sings!

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