

# MUSIC NOTES

## ABSALOM JONES

*From the Episcopal Church Archives*



Absalom Jones was America's first Black priest. Born into slavery in Delaware at a time when slavery was being debated as immoral and undemocratic, he taught himself to read, using the New Testament as one of his resources. At the age of 16, Jones' mother, sister, and five brothers were sold, but he was brought to Philadelphia by his master, where he attended a night school for African-Americans operated by Quakers. Upon his manumission in 1784, he served as lay

minister for the Black membership at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church with his friend, Richard Allen, and together they established the Free African Society to aid in the emancipation of slaves and to offer sustenance and spiritual support to widows, orphans, and the poor.

The active evangelism of Jones and Allen greatly increased Black membership at St. George's. Alarmed by the rise in black attendance, in 1791 the vestry decided to segregate African Americans into an upstairs gallery without notice. When ushers attempted to remove the black congregants, the resentful group exited the church. In 1792 Jones and Allen, with the assistance of local Quakers and Episcopalian, established the "First African Church" in Philadelphia. Shortly after the establishment that same year, the African Church applied to join the Protestant Episcopal Church, laying before the diocese three requirements: the Church must be received as an already organized body; it must have control over its own affairs; and Jones must be licensed as lay-reader and if qualified, ordained as its minister.

Upon acceptance into the Diocese of Pennsylvania, the church was renamed the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. The following year Jones became a deacon but was not ordained a priest until 1802, seven years later. At 56 years old, he became the first Black American priest. He continued to be a leader in his community, founding a day school (as African Americans were excluded from attending public school), the Female Benevolent Society, and an African Friendly Society. In 1800 he called upon Congress to abolish the slave trade and to provide for gradual emancipation of existing slaves. Jones died in 1818.

## THE REV. CANON HAROLD T. LEWIS

*From Episcopal Church Archives*



Harold Lewis served as rector of Calvary Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, until his retirement in 2012. He is an active chronicler of the African American struggle in the Episcopal Church and has participated on numerous church and seminary boards including the Office of Black Ministries as director from 1983 to 1994. He has served on the Standing Commission on World Mission of the Episcopal Church where he pressed to have African American missionaries recognized and celebrated alongside white missionaries.

Ordained in 1971, Lewis has ministered to parishes in England, Washington, D.C., New Haven, Connecticut, and Brooklyn, New York, and as a missionary in Honduras and Zaire. He served as headmaster of St. Mark's School in Brooklyn and is currently an adjunct professor in church and society at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Lewis has also taught at the George Mercer School of Theology, New York Theological Seminary, and General Theological Seminary.

Among Lewis's many publications are *Yet With a Steady Beat: the African American Struggle for Recognition in the Episcopal Church*, *Christian Social Witness*, and *Elijah's Mantle: Pilgrimage, Politics and Proclamation*. He has also contributed chapters to a number of books and written articles and poetry for a variety of publications. His latest work, *The Recent Unpleasantness*, documents his leadership in resisting Bishop Robert Duncan's efforts to pull the Diocese of Pittsburgh out of The Episcopal Church in 2008.

## LENA MCLIN

*From pbs.org – Witnesses to Faith*



Lena McLin was born in Atlanta, GA in 1929. Her father was a Baptist pastor and her mother was his Minister of Music. As Lena describes it, "we didn't know anything but music all of our lives."

Lena McLin went to live in Chicago with her uncle, gospel composer Thomas Dorsey, when his wife, Nettie, died in childbirth. It was 1932 and Lena was a little girl, but Thomas Dorsey wanted children around him, and Lena was already an accomplished musician, which Dorsey appreciated.

Despite being away from her mother, Lena enjoyed living with Dorsey. He was a kind

man, and taught her gospel songs on the piano. Her grandmother lived with them and would read to Lena from the Bible. She also sang spirituals from five in the morning when she woke up and throughout the day, patting her feet in time as she moved through the house.

Lena went to church and choir rehearsals with Dorsey, playing in the corner when she was small. As she got older, Dorsey let her accompany the choir on the piano for a few songs. Once, while playing piano for the Pilgrim Baptist Church Choir at a concert, a very fat lady was so moved by her playing that she "got the spirit" and started running down the aisle yelling, "play little girl!" Lena was so scared that she stopped playing and hid under the piano, much to the congregation's amusement.

Eventually, Dorsey remarried and had children, and McLin returned to Atlanta because, she says, "I had done my job." She went on to receive her B.M. in piano and violin from Spelman College in Atlanta, and then received her M.M. from the American Conservatory of Music, Chicago. McLin taught music in the Chicago public high schools for 36 years, nurturing hundreds of young singers and musicians. She is also a renowned composer of a wide range of music, including cantatas, masses, solo and choral arrangements of spirituals, anthems, rock operas, soul songs, works for piano and orchestra, and electronic music. Her most famous compositions are Gwendolyn Brooks: A musical Portrait, Free At Last, Psalm 117, and The Little Baby. In all her pieces, her musical style remains rooted in the church and gospel. Lena died on October 3, 2023.

## **CARL MAULTSBY**

*From St. James Music Press*



Composer, arranger, conductor, organist, keyboardist, singer, author, Carl MaultsBy, is a contemporary "renaissance artist" whose talents have been utilized both in the commercial media of musical theatre, film, television, records, and in the cultural media as well. He received the Doctor of Fine Arts degree (honoris causa) and the Bachelor of Arts degree in Mathematics and Music from Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, IL, as well as the Masters of Music degree in Jazz/Commercial Composition from Manhattan School of Music where he studied composition with Richard DeRosa and film scoring with Ed Green. In addition, MaultsBy, a former artist & repertoire (a&r) staff producer for RCA records, attended Columbia University where he studied music composition with the late Vladamir Ussachevsky and electronic music composition with Mario Davidovsky. MaultsBy also studied sacred music and organ at the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, CA. A 2002 inductee into the African Music Hall of Fame and a 2002 awardee of the American Music Center Margaret Fairbank Jory Copying Assistance

Program, he is also a recipient of a 2001 Harvard University Fromm Music Foundation Award, Eye of the Sparrow, and a 2003 New York State Council on the Arts Commission for his woodwind quintet, The Journey, composed for Quintet of the Americas.

## FLORENCE PRICE

*From Dr. Michael J. Cooper, Professor of Music, Southwestern University*



More than any other instrument or ensemble, the piano was the primary outlet for Price's inexhaustible musical imagination. It was the instrument on which she received her earliest musical education and it, together with the organ, was the focal point of her education at the New England Conservatory (Boston), where she completed two diplomas at the age of nineteen in 1906. It was the centerpiece of her music teaching at the Cotton Plant Academy (a large co-educational boarding school near Arkadelphia, Arkansas for Black Americans) from 1906 to 1910, and of her work as head of the Music Department of Atlanta University from 1910-1912. And she taught piano privately from 1912 until only months before her death in 1953 – not only to dozens of beginning, intermediate, and advanced students in Arkansas and her adopted hometown of Chicago, but also to her own daughters. Aside from the music she wrote for the instrument, one of the most telling (and charming) indications of the centrality of the piano to her identity as musician is an undated ink drawing found among the Florence Price papers in the Libraries of the University

Arkansas, Fayetteville – a competent drawing, apparently in a youthful hand, of a piano in a domestic room of some sort, lid up, bearing the caption: MY CAREER.

Small wonder, then, that compositions for piano make up some 216 of Price's total surviving output of 458 works – about 47%, more than any other single category, followed next by songs and arrangements of spirituals (all of which also include piano). Nor is it surprising that it was a composition for piano (*the suite In the Land o' Cotton*, presented on this album) that secured her recognition as a composer – a tie for second prize in the Holstein Competition sponsored by *Opportunity Magazine* in 1926 – or that it was piano compositions that fueled her rising renown in the early 1930s: a *Cotton Dance* won honorable mention in the Rodman Wanamaker Composition Competition for Composers of the Negro Race in 1931; her Piano Sonata (included on this album) and fourth (B-minor) Fantasie nègre won prizes in the same competition in 1932; and her Piano Concerto in One Movement was performed three times in 1933-34: at the commencement exercises of Chicago Musical College and the national convention of the National Association of Negro Musicians (both of these with Price herself as soloist), and with the Woman's Symphony Orchestra of Chicago at the *Century of Progress World's*

*Fair* in 1934 (this with Margaret Bonds as soloist). The Preludes included on the present album date from these early years, and in fact the only complete autograph of the set survives in the papers of Margaret Bonds now found in the Georgetown University Libraries (Washington, D.C.).

Florence Price's style began to change in the late 1930s, more overtly embracing modernist idioms in addition to the Afro-Romantic ones that characterized her earlier works – but the piano remained her constant musical companion to the end, with lyrical gems such as the *Three Roses* and *Your Hands* in Mine and evocative masterworks such as *Clouds*, the *Scenes in Tin Can Alley*, and her final major suite, *Snapshots*, rounding out the compositional products of her lifelong love of the instrument. She was preparing to leave to receive an award in France when she was hospitalized in May, 1953. She died of a cerebral hemorrhage on 3 June – leaving behind a handful of published works and hundreds of unpublished ones that are only now beginning to become known.

## ANDRAE' CROUCH

From [blackpast.org](http://blackpast.org)



Composer, conductor, lyricist, singer Andraé Edward Crouch was born on July 1, 1942, along with a twin sister, Sandra, in Compton, Los Angeles, California, to parents Benjamin, a minister, and Catherine Hodnett Crouch, manager of dry-cleaning operations. His older brother was Benjamin Crouch. They were reared in San Fernando Valley, California.

At 11, the dyslexic Crouch played the piano for the Church of God in Christ choir in San Fernando Valley. At the age of 14, he wrote his first Gospel composition. Crouch graduated from San Fernando Senior High School in San Fernando in 1960 and the same year, created the

Church of God in Christ Singers/COGICS with the legendary Billy Preston at the piano.

In 1964 at the age of 22, Crouch became the pastor of Christ Memorial Church of God in Christ in Pacoima following his father's death. The senior Crouch had previously led the congregation. At the time Crouch was also studying at Valley Junior College (VJC) in the San Fernando Valley and while there, in 1965, he formed the ensemble, Andraé Crouch & the Disciples. The following year in 1966, he left VJC and began taking classes at Life Bible College in Los Angeles.

Over the next five decades Crouch emerged as one of the most popular gospel artists in the United States writing, arranging and recording over 700 singles and more than 45 albums. His most successful album *Keep on Singing* released in 1972.

In 1980 Crouch received the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Gospel Artist. In addition, he has won eight Grammy Awards and was nominated for 20. It includes winning in 1980 for “Best Soul Gospel Performance, Contemporary” for the album *Don’t Give Up* at the 23rd Annual Grammy Awards; and Crouch’s “*Always Remember*” for “Best Soul Gospel Performance, Male” at the 26th Annual Grammy Awards in 1983. In addition, his album *Mercy* won for the “Best Pop/Contemporary Gospel Album at the 27th Annual Grammy Awards in 1984. In 1985, Crouch was nominated for music compositions featured in the film, *The Color Purple*. They were “Maybe God is Tryin’ to Tell You Somethin’” and “Heaven Belongs to You.”

In 1997, Crouch received an Honorary Doctor of Music from Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. The following year, 1998, he was inducted into the Gospel Music Association’s Gospel Music Hall of Fame. And in 2004, he was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In 2011, Crouch and his twin were awarded an honorary “Artist-in-Residence” Fellowship by the International Center of Worship for Global Day of Worship Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

In 2012, Crouch’s “Let The Church Say Amen,” featuring Marvin Winans, peaked at no. 32 and remained charted for 17 weeks on Billboard’s Adult R&B Airplay. For more than 60 weeks, the single stayed at the top of the charts prompting Billboard to name him “Gospel Songs Artist of the Year.”

# CHARLES ALBERT TINDLEY

From [discipleshipministries.org](http://discipleshipministries.org)



It is Thomas A. Dorsey (1899-1993), composer of "Precious Lord" and "There Will Be Peace in the Valley," who is known as the "Father of Gospel Music." But if that is true, then Charles Albert Tindley is the "Grandfather of Gospel Music," for it was Tindley who virtually invented the style a generation before Dorsey began composing, and it was Dorsey's hearing Tindley's hymns at an annual meeting of the National Baptist Convention in Philadelphia that led Dorsey to begin writing religious music. Dorsey had previously been a successful jazz and blues musician who often made use of bawdy and brash lyrics. While Dorsey went on to successfully blend the sacred spirituals and hymns with the secular style of blues and jazz, he always acknowledged his debt to Tindley.

Tindley was born fourteen years before the end of the American Civil War, the son of slave parents. By age five, both of his parents had died. By age seventeen he had taught himself how to read. He moved to Philadelphia and found employment as the janitor for the Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church. He took night classes and later correspondence courses from Boston University, eventually being ordained in the Methodist ministry, serving appointments in South Wilmington, Odessa, Ezion, Wilmington, Delaware, and May, New Jersey. From 1899-1902 he served as presiding elder of the Wilmington district.

In 1902 Tindley was appointed pastor of the Calvary Methodist Church, the church that had employed him thirty years earlier as its janitor. This was to be his position until his death in 1933. During his appointment at Calvary, the church experienced great growth in numbers and ministry, growing to over 7,000 members that included African Americans, Europeans, Jews, and Hispanics. Upon building a new church building, the congregation changed its name over Tindley's protest to Tindley Temple Methodist Church.

Tindley composed forty-seven hymns, some of which are still protected by US copyright law. Tindley's hymns formed the basis of the black gospel hymn style for all who came after. They were based on the spiritual and the blues and included elements from white gospel style. Tindley wrote his hymns within the older tradition of African American worship and music that included distinctive preaching and singing styles, lining-out, shouting, hand-clapping, improvised melodies, rhythmic keyboard accompaniments, and congregational interjections of hallelujahs and amens. The congregation would often sing

along with the choir or soloist. Later in the twentieth century the style included the addition of the electronic organ, especially the early Hammond organs, and percussion instruments. Tindley's lyrics are a reflection of the daily lives of African Americans of the time, and speak of poverty, discrimination, suffering, with deliverance, freedom, and a better day coming.

## THOMAS DORSEY

*From Nashvillesongwritersfoundation.com*



Thomas Dorsey is known as one of the twentieth century's premier composers of gospel music. His best-known works — "Take My Hand, Precious Lord" and "Peace in the Valley" — have become modern standards, known equally well to fans of all genres of American music. His songs have long been favorites in the country music community.

Thomas Dorsey's father was a Baptist revival minister, and his mother played the church organ. Born in Carroll County, Georgia in 1899, he was

singing in Atlanta church choirs by 1908. While working selling refreshments at an Atlanta theater as a boy, he learned to read music and play piano from the venue's pianists.

He performed in Atlanta bars, brothels and dance halls from 1910 to 1916, then briefly attended Morehouse College. He moved north to the Chicago area and attended a music school there while working in the city's clubs with his five-piece band from 1919 to 1923. Subsequently, he accompanied and toured with legendary blues star Ma Rainey in from 1924 to 1928.

He launched his own recording career in 1928, originally billed as bluesman "Georgia Tom." His risqué "It's Tight Like That" became a major hit record in 1928 and led to more than 60 other blues recordings by him. In addition to Georgia Tom, his many pseudonyms during his blues-performing days included Barrelhouse Tommy, Memphis Jim, Railroad Bill, Smokehouse Charley, and Texas Tommy. He also recorded as a member of the Famous Hokum Boys and in duos with Tampa Red (Hudson Whittaker) and Kansas City Kitty (probably Thelma Holmes).

But throughout his blues career, he also composed religious songs. He formed his Thomas A. Dorsey Gospel Songs Music Publishing Company in 1930. In 1932, he became choral director at the Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago, where for the next 40 years he would compose some of the best-loved gospel songs in America. From that point on, he concentrated on gospel music exclusively. He is now regarded as the father of modern gospel songwriting and the writer of two of the genre's greatest standards, "Take My Hand, Precious Lord" and "Peace in the Valley."

He was elected to the Georgia Music Hall of Fame in 1981 and given a Recording Academy Trustees Award in 1992. Thomas A. Dorsey lived to the age of 93. His papers are preserved at Fisk University in Nashville.

## **ADOLPHUS HAILSTORK**

*From adolphushailstorkcomposer.com*



Adolphus Hailstork received his doctorate in composition from Michigan State University, where he was a student of H. Owen Reed. He had previously studied at the Manhattan School of Music, under Vittorio Giannini and David Diamond, at the American Institute at Fontainebleau with Nadia Boulanger, and at Howard University with Mark Fax.

Dr. Hailstork has written numerous works for chorus, solo voice, piano, organ, various chamber ensembles, band, orchestra, and opera.

Among his early compositions are: CELEBRATION, recorded by the Detroit Symphony in 1976; OUT OF THE DEPTHS (1977), and AMERICAN GUERNICA (1983), are two band works which won national competitions. CONSORT PIECE (1995) commissioned by the Norfolk (Va.) Chamber Ensemble, was awarded first prize by the University of Delaware Festival of Contemporary Music.

Significant performances by major orchestras (Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York) have been led by leading conductors such as James de Priest, Paul Freeman, Daniel Barenboim, Kurt Masur, Lorin Maazel, Jo Ann Falletta and David Lockington. This March, Thomas Wilkins conducted Hailstork's AN AMERICAN PORT OF CALL with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

The composer's second symphony (commissioned by the Detroit Symphony, and second opera, JOSHUA'S BOOTS (commissioned by the Opera Theatre of St. Louis and the Kansas City Lyric Opera) were both premiered in 1999. Hailstork's second and third symphonies were recorded by the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra (David Lockington) and were released by Naxos. Another Naxos recording, AN AMERICAN PORT OF CALL (Virginia Symphony Orchestra) was released in spring 2012.

Recent commissions include RISE FOR FREEDOM, an opera about the Underground Railroad, premiered in the fall of 2007 by the Cincinnati Opera Company, SET ME ON A ROCK (re: Hurricane Katrina), for chorus and orchestra, commissioned by the Houston Choral Society (2008), and the choral ballet, THE GIFT OF THE MAGI, for treble chorus and orchestra, (2009). In the fall of 2011, ZORA, WE'RE CALLING YOU, a work for speaker and orchestra was premiered by the Orlando Symphony. I SPEAK OF PEACE commissioned by the Bismarck Symphony (Beverly Everett, conductor) in honor of (and featuring the words of) President John F. Kennedy was premiered in November of 2013.

Hailstork's newest works include THE WORLD CALLED (based on Rita Dove's poem TESTIMONIAL), a work for soprano, chorus and orchestra commissioned by the Oratorio Society of Virginia (premiered in May 2018) and STILL HOLDING ON (February 2019) an orchestra work commissioned and premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He is currently working on his Fourth Symphony, and A KNEE ON A NECK (tribute to George Floyd) for chorus and orchestra.

Dr. Hailstork resides in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and is Professor of Music and Eminent Scholar at Old Dominion University in Norfolk.



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