

# ***A Place for You***

## **Program Notes**

### ***Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing* by J. Rosamond Johnson (arr. Steph Davis)**

“Often referred to as “The Black National Anthem,” *Lift Every Voice and Sing* was a hymn written as a poem by NAACP leader James Weldon Johnson in 1900. His brother, John Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954), composed the music for the lyrics. A choir of 500 schoolchildren at the segregated Stanton School, where James Weldon Johnson was principal, first performed the song in public in Jacksonville, Florida to celebrate President Abraham Lincoln's birthday.

At the turn of the 20th century, Johnson's lyrics eloquently captured the solemn yet hopeful appeal for the liberty of Black Americans. Set against the religious invocation of God and the promise of freedom, the song was later adopted by NAACP and prominently used as a rallying cry during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.”

- NAACP

### ***Remember, Marimba* by Errollyn Wallen**

“Before starting this piece, I spent some time considering the history of the marimba. I decided to try to imagine-and try to capture- some of the secrets and ghosts of this marvelous instrument's origins.

This piece typifies my love for rhythmic and melodic patterns that weave together in often asymmetric ways, all the time keeping in mind the centuries' journey of wood. Towards the end of *Remember, Marimba*, I take and extend a theme (played on the marimba) from the second movement of my *Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra*, thus continuing the notion of members and recollection to the history of my own music.”

- Errollyn Wallen

### ***Mother's Sacrifice* by L. Viola Kinney (adapt. Steph Davis)**

“*Mother's Sacrifice*” is Ms. Kinney's only surviving work. She registered the copyrights for at least two other compositions: *Show Me* (1941) and *Time Out for Love* (1943). Kinney submitted this salon-style piano solo for the Inter-State Literary Society Original Music Contest in 1908. It won second place.”

- Anthony R. Green

***I go to prepare a place for you.* by Steph Davis**

Born into slavery, Harriet Tubman was an abolitionist and activist. She has helped to lead an estimated 70 enslaved people to freedom. The title is in reference to her last words, “I go to prepare a place for you.” This piece depicts Harriet’s and her crew’s landscape as they traveled along the underground railroad, and is dedicated to Harriet’s unwavering strength, bravery, and resolve to free as many enslaved people as possible.

***Music for Two Marimbas* by Matthew Evan Taylor**

This piece contains two contrasting sections —the first, slow and saturated with rolls, and the second, fast and articulate.

***Naima* by John Coltrane (arr. Thomas Oboe Lee)**

“Naima” was written in 1959 by John Coltrane in honor of his first wife Juanita Austin, more often known by the nicknames of Naima (pronounced Ny-EE-ma) or Nita. The song was first recorded in May 1959 for the album “Giant Steps”, which was released in early 1960 and selected in 2004 by the Library of Congress for the National Recording Registry. Biographer John Litweiler said “... the melody of ‘Naima’—quiet, sunfilled—is worthy of Coltrane’s reverence, the unsuspected calm in the midst of his storms....”. Coltrane recorded this song many times over the course of his life, and is said to have considered it his best composition.”

- Program note from KUVU Jazz

***Watch and Pray Spiritual* (arr. Undine Smith Moore, adapt. Steph Davis)**

*Watch and Pray* is a Spiritual arranged by Undine Smith Moore for piano and voice. The text of the Spiritual reads:

*Mama, is Massa goin' to sell us tomorrow? Yes, Yes, Yes.  
Oh watch and pray.  
Is he a-goin' to sell us down to Georgia? Yes, yes, yes.  
Oh! down to Georgia,  
Watch and pray. Oh mama  
Don't you grieve after me.  
Oh, watch and pray.*

***Lyric for Strings* by George Walker (adapt. Steph Davis)**

“Pianist and composer George Walker (1922–2018) knew his grandmother – his mother’s mother – very well. She had experienced much during her long life, including losing her first husband when he was sold; she herself managed to escape slavery. About a year after she died, the 24-year-old Walker composed his first string quartet. When he was given the chance to hear its poetic slow movement performed by a string orchestra, he added the title Lament and

dedicated it as an elegy “To my grandmother.” Later titled *Lyric for Strings*, the six-minute work – he continued to call it “my grandmother’s piece” – became his best-known and most-performed work in a long and remarkable career. In 1996, he became the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music for *Lilacs*, which Walker wrote for soprano and orchestra.”

- Program note from LA Phil

***Deep River Spiritual* (arr. Steph Davis)**

Deep River is an old Negro melody, made popular by various post-Antebellum musicians and composers, including The Fisk Jubilee Singers, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Harry. T Burleigh, and Marian Anderson. This arrangement for marimba and fixed media plants the Spiritual in the contemporary landscape while striving to evoke the sonic experience of the original Spirituals, the ones sung by enslaved Africans on plantations. These spirituals, and the fixed media track, are characterized by uncolonized dissonances, unceasing variation, improvisation, and expressivity above all else.

Program Notes compiled by Steph Davis