



AMERICAN CLASSICS



Florence Beatrice

PRICE

**Violin
Concertos
Nos. 1 and 2**

**Piano Concerto
in One Movement**

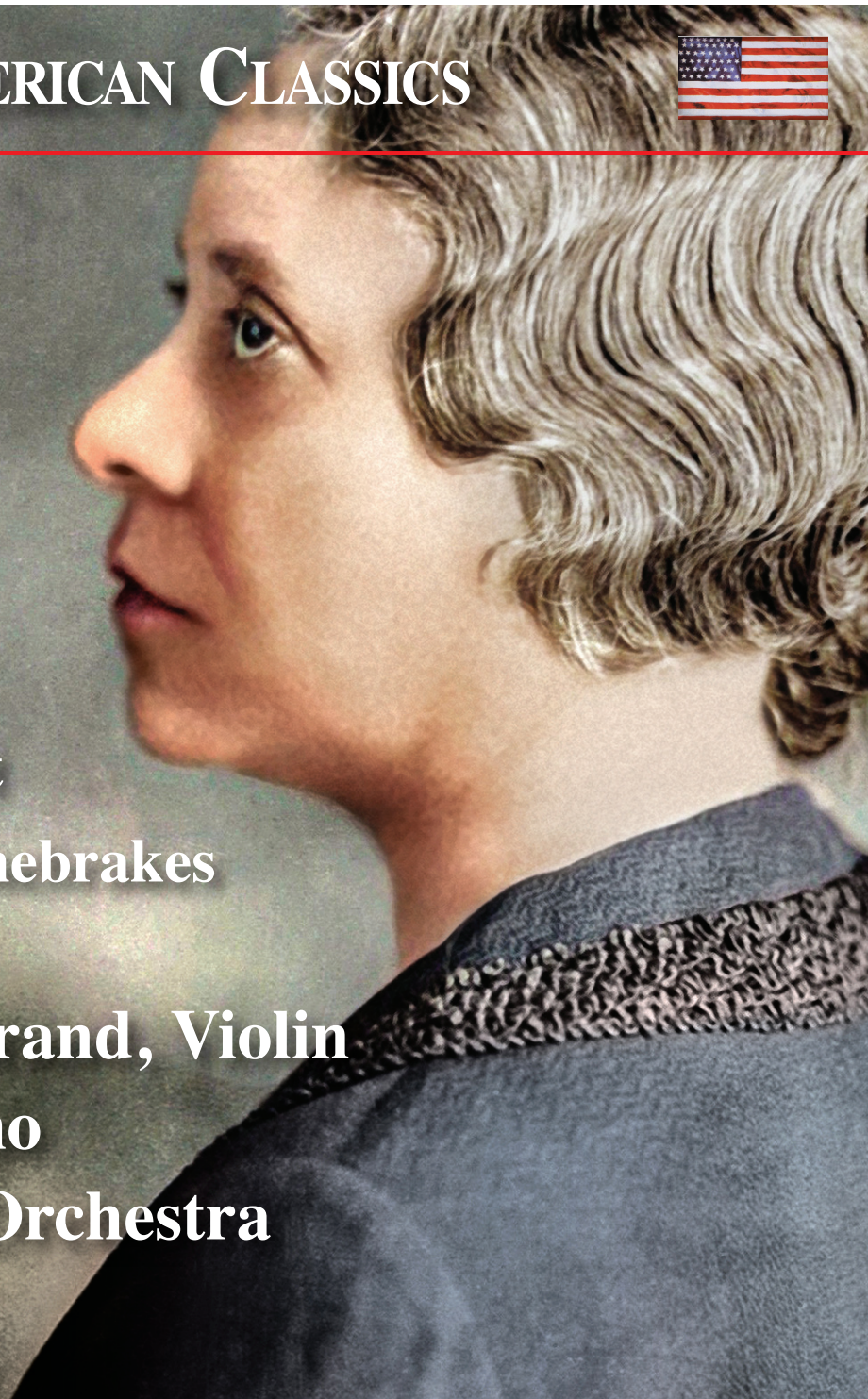
Dances in the Canebrakes

Fanny Clamagirand, Violin

Han Chen, Piano

Malmö Opera Orchestra

John Jeter



Florence Beatrice Price (1887–1953)

Violin Concertos Nos. 1 and 2 • Piano Concerto in One Movement • Dances in the Canebrakes

Florence Beatrice Price was a consummate musician – a pianist and organist, a composer, and a teacher. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, into a prominent African American family, she was educated in the city's segregated school system and excelled in both academics and music, graduating first in her high school class at age 15. After encountering difficulty finding advanced musical instruction in the US South, she instead chose Boston's New England Conservatory, where she graduated with diplomas in organ performance and piano pedagogy after only three years. Upon returning to Arkansas in 1906, she began a lengthy career as an instructor in segregated academies, including a two-year term at Atlanta's Clark College, with students ranging from young children to young adults. Increasing racist violence compelled her family – a husband and two young daughters – to flee Little Rock in 1927 for Chicago, where an uncle had moved in the 1890s and where she had recently pursued additional instruction in compositional skills like orchestration. This newfound interest in composition would sustain her artistic life in the predominantly African American South Side of Chicago until her unexpected death from a heart attack in 1953.

Musicologist Samantha Ege has documented that the South Side had long been a cultural nucleus for musicians, visual artists, painters, writers, and other creative people, even preceding Harlem as a destination for these endeavors. Here, Price found eclectic collaborators and supporters, such as choreographer Katherine Dunham, pianist (and erstwhile student) Margaret Bonds, and the irrepressible writer Nora Holt. By the time of her death in 1953, Price had written nearly 400 individual pieces in practically every classical genre but opera, as well as numerous songs for the commercial marketplace. Her greatest champions included contraltos Marian Anderson and Etta Moten, conductors Frederick Stock and Valter Poole, and the US Marine Band.

Price's two violin concertos and piano concerto comprise her entire output in the genre. The piano concerto was completed in 1934, just after her storied debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which had premiered her first symphony in June of the previous year, and the first violin concerto is dated December 1939. These two pieces thus form one bookend of her career with the second violin concerto, completed just a few months before death, forming the other. Little is known about the circumstances behind the composition of the first violin concerto – for whom it was written or for what occasion – and it seems highly likely that it was never performed during Price's lifetime.

The piano concerto, on the other hand, had a significant presence and was one of Price's most frequently performed classical works. Likely begun in fall 1933, the piece was dedicated to Price's friend Helen Armstrong Andrews and benefited from Price's private access to a Chicago Symphony Orchestra rehearsal late in the year, when she heard Artur Schnabel play Beethoven's *Fourth Concerto*. Price later debuted the concerto while serving as soloist herself at the June 1934 commencement of the Chicago Musical College, where she had previously taken composition classes. (The same Beethoven concerto also appeared on the program.) Price soloed in the concerto on other occasions in Pittsburgh, New York, and Detroit, and, on at least two more, her friend Margaret Bonds did so, most notably with the Woman's Symphony Orchestra of Chicago under the baton of Ebba Sundstrom.

The second violin concerto had a more tragic life. Written for Price's friend and fellow clubwoman, violinist Minnie Cedargreen Jernberg (1889–1967), it received its premiere a few months after Price's death in June 1953 at a concert given in the composer's memory by the Musicians Club of Women. Jernberg would perform it twice more – once at a club concert in 1955 and again in 1964 at the dedication of the Florence B. Price Elementary School on Chicago's South Side – before the score was abandoned with dozens of others in a house that once served as Price's summer home. This material was recovered in 2009, enabling both violin concertos and the original orchestration of the piano concerto to see the light of day.

Price's first violin concerto is easily the most expansive of the three, with a sprawling opening movement lasting nearly as long as the other two works in their entirety. Stylistically, it exhibits what musicologist A. Kori Hill calls "Black classical formalism," an aesthetic that blends conventions from the Western classical tradition with conscious strategies meant to deviate from it recognizably. Like Samuel Barber's violin concerto, also from 1939, the piece also fully inhabits a world of conservative modernism common among Price's contemporaries.

Exemplifying Black classical formalism, the first movement unfolds in a relaxed series of tableaux, rather than a strict forward-moving structure like sonata-allegro form. The solo violin often introduces new melodic material (as opposed to repeating what the orchestra has already played), becoming a protagonist on a journey with cadenza-like passages speckled throughout. Listeners can hear also overt melodic references to Tchaikovsky's grand violin concerto (which shares the key of D major), but, in each case, the reference seems to appear only for Price to leave it behind for other creative vistas.

As a slow, extended interlude and a rollicking finale, the second and third movements feel more conventional than the episodic first. Lushly orchestrated with cantabile themes, the second contains some of Price's most blues-inflected melodic material, particularly the solo violinist's opening entrance. Equally unusual for the composer, a quasi-improvisatory section featuring a duet between the solo violinist and solo flute at times sounds archaic with an open-fifth drone in the background. The third movement, meanwhile, is a relaxed perpetuum mobile in compound time with the solo violinist rarely taking a breath.

Though titled *Concerto for Piano in One Movement*, the structure of this piece follows the conventional fast-slow-fast pattern with a grand opening, a lyrical interlude, and a dancelike finale, all separated by brief pauses. The first "movement," or section, opens with a haunting solo trumpet statement of the main motif before the soloist enters with an extended virtuosic gesture befitting the grand Romantic bravura tradition. The rest of the movement comprises transformations of the main motif in a complex emotional dialogue between piano and orchestra. The second section features a beautiful duet between the piano soloist and a solo oboe. It is some of Price's most profoundly introspective music. Upending its questioning start, the third movement launches into a snappy juba dance theme first stated by the piano before being taken up by other sections of the orchestra. Appreciating the finale's folksy quality, one critic remarked in 1934, "There is real American music and Mrs. Price is speaking a language she knows."

Perhaps ironically, Price's second violin concerto *does* comprise only a single movement, reflecting a significant shift in her thinking about form that scholars have at times attributed to her engagement with modernist contemporaries like Roy Harris, with whom she studied briefly in 1946 and whose 1949 violin concerto also contains a single movement. Price's concerto consists of two main themes – a flighty, flickering tune with sparse accompaniment and a more serious, extended melody accompanied with lush strings and brass. Each appears in various guises throughout the piece, giving it a compactness that nevertheless maximizes novelty. More than most of her catalog, this work also eschews inflections of Black vernacular music, placing it at some remove from the rest of her orchestral catalog.

Originally written for solo piano and later orchestrated by William Grant Still (1895–1978), *Dances in the Canebrakes* is a short set of three pieces evoking 19th-century African American life. The outer two movements, *Nimble Feet* and *Silk Hat and Walking Cane*, exhibit relaxed syncopation, with the latter containing the rhythmic pattern characteristic of the cakewalk, a dance developed by enslaved persons in part to mock white plantation owners. The middle movement, *Tropical Noon*, is underpinned by a modified habanera rhythm, granting it a distinctively Afro-Caribbean character. Following classical convention, Price gave each dance a contrasting inner section, allowing the entire set to sparkle with variety.

Douglas W. Shadle
Vanderbilt University

Fanny Clamagirand



Photo: Jean-Baptiste Millot

For many years now, Fanny Clamagirand has been establishing herself as an artist and violinist of great distinction. Acclaimed for the elegance of her playing and interpretations that blend sensitivity, authority and freedom, she has performed at prestigious venues and festivals internationally, and as a soloist with leading orchestras including the Orchestre National de France, London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic. Winner of the Monte-Carlo Violin Masters (2007) and the International Fritz Kreisler Competition in Vienna (2005), Clamagirand studied in Paris, London and Vienna. Her rich discography, widely rewarded by the specialist press, includes recordings of Ysaÿe's *Six Sonatas* for solo violin (Nascor), Saint-Saëns's *Violin Concertos Nos. 1–3* (8.572037), a three-volume cycle of works for violin and piano with Vanya Cohen (8.572750; 8.572751; 8.574314) and Beethoven's *Violin Concerto* set against Pēteris Vasks's *Distant Light* (Mirare, ECO/Masur). Clamagirand was one of the Jubilee Ambassadors of the Bärenreiter music publishing house, marking its centenary celebrations, and is artistic director of Les Classiques de la Villa Charlotte, a new international festival in France established in 2023. She plays a 1700 Matteo Goffriller violin.

www.fannyclamagirand.com

Han Chen



Photo: Zhenwei Liu

A fearless performer with seemingly limitless imagination and possessed with uncanny energy, critically acclaimed pianist Han Chen plays scores old and new with rare rigor and insight. Gold medallist of the 2013 China International Piano Competition and a prizewinner at the 2018 Honens International Piano Competition, Chen's musical vision is manifest in his four solo Naxos albums, focusing on Franz Liszt (8.573415), Anton Rubinstein (8.573989), Thomas Adès (8.574109) and György Ligeti (8.574397). He has appeared as a soloist with the Calgary Philharmonic, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, Lexington Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, China National Symphony Orchestra and Xiamen Philharmonic. Chen also performs as solo recitalist worldwide. He is a core member of Ensemble Échappé, and also regularly collaborates with the Metropolis Ensemble. In 2021, he launched Migration Music, an ongoing series of performances and interviews with immigrant composers. Han Chen studied with Yoheved Kaplinsky, Wha Kyung Byun and Ursula Oppens at The Juilliard School, New England Conservatory, and CUNY Graduate Center. He is represented by Black Tea Music.

www.hanchenpiano.com

Malmö Opera Orchestra



Photo: Malin Arnesson

Malmö Opera Orchestra was founded in 1991. Consisting of 62 musicians, the orchestra is recognised for its ability to master a wide range of musical styles, from the classic operas to contemporary music dramas, musicals and ballet. Each season the orchestra performs symphonic programmes, gala concerts and chamber recitals alongside its core work as an opera orchestra. The orchestra has made several recordings which include symphonic music and operatic repertoire and performances. From 2015 to 2024 Leif Segerstam (1944–2024) was the orchestra's honorary conductor after previously serving as chief conductor. Patrik Ringborg is the orchestra's principal guest conductor since 2022, and the orchestra's director is Tecwyn Evans. www.malmoopera.se

John Jeter



John Jeter has been music director and conductor of the Fort Smith Symphony since 1997. He is the recipient of the Governor's Award for "Individual Artist of the State of Arkansas", the Helen M. Thompson Award presented by the League of American Orchestras, and the Mayor's Achievement Award for services to the City of Fort Smith. Jeter has guest conducted numerous orchestras in the US and Europe. His music education programs for schools reach up to 10,000 students annually. He is also involved in a growing number of music and wellness projects, and has a long history as a media guest and host. Jeter received his formal education at the University of Hartford's Hartt School of Music, and Butler University's Jordan College of Fine Arts.

acm360artists.com

Florence Beatrice
PRICE
(1887–1953)

Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major (1939) 31:11

- 1** I. Tempo moderato 18:17
- 2** II. Andante 7:22
- 3** III. Allegro 5:32

4 Violin Concerto No. 2 in D major (1952) 16:07

Tempo moderato (♩ = 132) – Più mosso – Andante cantabile –
Allegretto – Andante cantabile – Tempo I (♩ = 132) – Vigoroso –
Tempo moderato (♩ = 60) – Andante cantabile – Allegretto –
Allegro – Andante con espressione – Allegro

**Piano Concerto in One Movement in D minor
(1933–34) (ed. Nick Greer and Clovis Lark) 16:49**

- 5** Andantino (♩ = 92) – 7:44
- 6** Adagio cantabile (♩ = 76) (bar 220) – 5:33
- 7** Andantino (bar 319) – Allegretto 3:32

**Dances in the Canebrakes
(arr. William Grant Still for orchestra) 9:13**

- 8** No. 1. Nimble feet 2:40
- 9** No. 2. Tropical Noon 3:27
- 10** No. 3. Silk Hat and Walking Cane 3:06

Fanny Clamagirand, Violin 1–4

Han Chen, Piano 5–7

Malmö Opera Orchestra • John Jeter

Recorded: 19–22 March 2024 at Malmö Opera House, Sweden

Producer, engineer and editor: Sean Lewis

Booklet notes: Douglas W. Shadle

Publishers: G. Schirmer, Inc., New York 1–7,

William Grant Still Music 8–10

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AMERICAN CLASSICS

Florence Price reached her musical maturity in Chicago during the 1930s – the decade in which she made a famous debut with the city’s orchestra and produced two substantial concertos. The *Piano Concerto in One Movement* contains some of her most beautiful music set alongside moments of Romantic bravura. *Violin Concerto No. 1* seems never to have been performed during her lifetime but is the most expansive of her concertos and is richly orchestrated. The later *Violin Concerto No. 2* is a much more compact work, cast in one expressive movement. *Dances in the Canebrakes*, originally for piano, evokes 19th-century African American life, heard here in William Grant Still’s orchestration.

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Playing
Time:
74:03