

**DMA RECITAL
SONGS OF THE SEASONS:
ENDURING LOSS AND LOVE**

Friday, August 25th, 2023
Recital Hall
7:30 pm

**ALISSA PLENZLER, SOPRANO
DR. JOHN ROBERTSON, PIANO**

PROGRAM

FALL

Poeme d'automne, from <i>Songs of the Seasons</i> (1955)	Margaret Bonds (1913-1972)
I Am in Doubt (1975)	Undine Smith Moore (1904-1989)
Selections from <i>Four Romantic Love Songs</i> (1994) Invitation to Love Longing	Adolphus Hailstork (b. 1941)

WINTER

Winter Moon, from <i>Songs of the Seasons</i> (1955)	Margaret Bonds
Sence You Went Away, from <i>Nightsongs: Six Afro-American Songs</i> (1961) Adams	H. Leslie (b. 1931)
Grief (1953)	William Grant Still (1895 – 1987)
Good-Night, from <i>Four Romantic Love Songs</i> (1994)	Adolphus Hailstork

INTERMISSION

SPRING

Young Love in Spring, from <i>Songs of the Seasons</i> (1955)	Margaret Bonds
Loveliest of Trees (2012)	Adolphus Hailstork
Spring (1913)	Florence B. Price (1887-1953)
The Year's at the Spring (2002)	Lena J. McLin (b. 1928)
Love, from <i>Five Black Songs</i> (1974)	Mark Fax (1911-1974)

SUMMER

Summer Storm, from <i>Songs of the Seasons</i> (1955)	Margaret Bonds
I Want to Die While You Love Me (1919)	H. T. Burleigh (1886-1949)
I Want to Die While You Love Me (1975)	Undine Smith Moore
I Want to Die While You Love Me, from <i>Miss Wheatley's Garden</i> (2007)	Rosephanye Powell (b. 1962)

SOLSTICE

A Song Without Words (1974)	Charles Brown (1922-1999)
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*This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctor of Musical Arts Degree in Voice Performance.
Ms. Plenzler is a student of Dr. Alexis Davis-Hazell.*

1st Program of the 2023 - 2024 season

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SONGS OF THE SEASONS

Program Notes

Program Rationale: *Songs of the Seasons* was uniquely conceived in the sense that it was not all composed at one time. “Poème d’automne” and “Winter Moon” are some of the first art songs Margaret Bonds ever wrote, composed shortly after completing undergraduate music studies in Chicago. The latter two pieces which complete the cycle, “Young Love in Spring” and “Summer Storm”, were not written until almost 20 years later when she was well into her professional composition career in New York City. As such, this work not only bookends a large portion of her personal and professional life but also marries her early style to later compositional maturity. Whether intended or coincidental, Margaret Bonds’ evolving voice truly evokes the contrast and color of the different seasons relayed in Langston Hughes’ text. Using this cycle as the foundation for the formation of the rest of the program provided me with the chance to extricate each of the pieces in *Songs of the Seasons* to its own set and align other African American art song selections with the mood and emotional depth created by Hughes and Bonds. The resulting program parallels the changing astronomical seasons with the very human and intimate phases of longing, heartbreak, healing, and new love.

Chicago-born **Margaret Bonds (1913 – 1972)** discovered the poems of **Langston Hughes** in 1929 when she was beginning her study of music at Northwestern University. During a time when she experienced deep seated racial prejudice, she found the poem “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” from his collection *The Weary Blues* in the basement of the Evanston Public Library. Secured by the poem’s sentiment, she said, “I know that poem helped save me.” In 1936, after graduating from Northwestern, she finally met Hughes at the home of mutual friend and musician Tony Hill. Even though he moved to New York towards the end of the year, Hughes still heartened Bonds’ creative pursuits. She started setting much of his poetry to music at this time, including the first two pieces of *Songs of the Seasons*: “Poème d’automne” and “Winter Moon.”

In 1939, a year after founding the Allied Arts Academy in Chicago, Bonds was forced to close down due to economic difficulties. It was at this time Hughes encouraged her to move to New York. Ushering her into the New York scene, Hughes introduced Bonds to his great many friends and peers. Among these was Lawrence Richardson, Hughes’ friend, and fellow student at Lincoln University. Margaret and Lawrence became very close and ultimately married in 1940. This did not stall her creative output. Reunited in the same locale, Bonds and Hughes became a collaborative powerhouse – writing and composing a second musical, numerous songs of support for the troops during World War II, and their critically acclaimed collaborative work *The Ballad of the Brown King* in 1954.

Throughout the 50s and 60s, Bonds continued to set Hughes' texts ultimately completing *Songs of the Seasons* in 1955 with "Young Love in Spring" and "Summer Storm." The two continuously worked together to program numerous events celebrating African American poetry and music, Bonds eventually bringing these projects to fruition after Langston Hughes' death in 1967.

- FALL -

Poème d'automne

Langston Hughes (1901 – 1967)

The autumn leaves
Are too heavy with color.
The slender trees
On the Vulcan Road
Are dressed in scarlet and gold
Like young courtesans
Waiting for their lovers.

But soon
The winter winds
Will strip their bodies bare
And then
The sharp, sleet-stung
Caresses of cold
Will be their only
Love.

Considered the Dean of Black Women Composers, **Undine Smith Moore (1904 – 1989)** was a classically trained pianist, composer, and music educator born in Jarratt, Virginia. She attended Fisk University where she studied piano and organ. In 1924, she was the first ever Fisk University recipient of the Julliard School scholarship which aided her completion of undergraduate studies. She received a Master of Arts and professional diploma in music at the Columbia University's Teachers College, continued to study composition from Howard Murphy at the Manhattan School of Music and attended workshop in composition at the Eastman School of Music. Moore's setting of Florence Hynes Willette's text contextualizes the impact of growing doubt and the fragility of love with large leaps of the vocal line and amongst a rather sparse accompaniment. **Florence Hynes Willette**, born in Winnebago, Minnesota, wrote her first poems in primary school for a contest in Blue Earth, Minnesota. She was first published at the behest of Monsignor Luigi Ligutti in the Columbia Magazine produced by the National Catholic Rural Life Conference. She published two books in her lifetime and much of her work pertained to the intricacies of life and love of her Midwestern farm landscape, marriage, six children, and 34 grandchildren.

I Am in Doubt

Florence Hynes Willette (1901 – 1982)

I'll love you until stars fall.
Can it be so sure, so lasting as my heart
demands
of one whose slightest touch upon my
hands
is like the wind inside an aspen tree?

I am in doubt of this frail thing
I hold so sworn to constancy
And this is why, why,
Too often I have watched a burnt
blue sky
Where slipping stars spilled scarlet
and grew cold.

Adolphus Cunningham Hailstork III (b. 1941), composer and educator, was born in Rochester, New York and spent most of his childhood in Albany studying voice, piano, organ, and violin. In 1963, he began music composition study at Howard University with Mark Fax. During the summer of the same year, Hailstork traveled to the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau, France to study with Nadia Boulanger. He received his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Manhattan School of Music in 1965 and 1966 respectively. In 1971, he concluded his formal education by receiving a PhD in Music Composition from Michigan State University under the tutelage of H. Owen Reed. A composer of African American, Native American, and European descent, he marries these musical traditions in works for solo voice, chamber ensembles, chorus, piano, organ, orchestra, and band. Hailstork composed *Four Romantic Love Songs* with text by Paul Laurence Dunbar in 1994.

Born in 1872 to parents who were formerly enslaved, **Paul Laurence Dunbar** was a poet, author, librettist, essayist, and activist who championed dialectical writing and the Black voice prior to the Harlem Renaissance. Growing up in Dayton, Ohio with his widowed mother, he caught attention for his writing in high school as the literary society president and editor of the school newspaper. Financial straits prohibited Dunbar's original career aspirations of becoming a lawyer and upon entering the workforce, he faced much discrimination. He continued to pursue professional writing and in 1892, his work was championed by James Newtown Matthews in a letter that was reprinted countrywide. Dunbar published many books and collections of poetry throughout the course of his life including *Majors and Minors* in 1895 which includes the text for "Invitation to

Invitation to Love

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872 – 1906)

Come when the nights are bright with stars
Or come when the moon is mellow;
Come when the sun his golden bars
Drops on the hay-field yellow.
Come in the twilight soft and gray,
Come in the night or come in the day,
Come, O love, whene'er you may,
And you are welcome, welcome.
You are sweet, O Love, dear Love,
You are soft as the nesting dove.
Come to my heart and bring it to rest
As the bird flies home to its welcome nest.

Come when my heart is full of grief
Or when my heart is merry;
Come with the falling of the leaf
Or with the redd'ning cherry.
Come when the year's first blossom blows,
Come when the summer gleams and
glows,
Come with the winter's drifting snows,
And you are welcome, welcome.

Longing

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872 – 1906)

If you could sit with me beside the sea to-day,
And whisper with me sweetest dreamings o'er
and o'er;
I think I should not find the clouds so dim and
gray,
And not so loud the waves complaining at the
shore.

If you could sit with me upon the shore to-day,
And hold my hand in yours as in the days of
old,
I think I should not mind the chill baptismal
spray,
Nor find my hand and heart and all the world
so cold.

If you could walk with me upon the strand
to-day,
And tell me that my longing love had won your
own,
I think all my sad thoughts would then be put
away,

- WINTER -

Winter Moon

Langston Hughes (1901 – 1967)

How thin and sharp is the moon tonight!
How thin and sharp and ghostly white
Is the slim curved crook of the moon tonight!

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, **H. Leslie Adams (b. 1932)** started studying music at the age of 4 with Dorothy Smith, a neighbor and violinist. He received his Bachelor's degree in Music Education from Oberlin College in 1955, a Master's degree in Music from California State University, Long Beach in 1967, and finally his Ph.D. in Music from Ohio State University in 1973. He was awarded composer in residency fellowships from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1979 and the Yaddo Artist Residence in 1980 and 1984. As a music educator, he taught high school and then went on to receive faculty appointments at Stillman College, Florida A&M University, and the University of Kansas, Lawrence. He currently resides in Cleveland, still composing and guest lecturing at various collegiate symposiums. "Sence You Went Away" with text by James Weldon Johnson, was published in 1961 and is the fifth piece in Adams' song cycle titled *Nightsongs: Six Afro-American Songs*.

James Weldon Johnson, born in Jacksonville Florida in 1871, was an American writer, diplomat, and civil rights activist. Originally intending to practice law after working as a public school educator in Florida, he and his brother, composer James Rosamond Johnson moved to New York City during the Great Migration. They became a songwriting team, and achieved some success on Broadway at the beginning of the 20th century. Alongside the collaboration with his brother, Johnson maintained a life of public duty, educating, serving in the diplomatic corps, and becoming a civil rights activist. After working for Theodore Roosevelt's winning presidential campaign, James Weldon Johnson was appointed consul to Puerto Cabello, Venezuela for two years, then to Nicaragua for four. After these appointments, he returned to New York City where he met his wife Grace Nail. Returning to his creative pursuits, he became one of the leading voices of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s.

Sence You Went Away

James Weldon Johnson (1871 – 1938)

Seems lak to me de stars don't shine so bright,	Seems lak to me dat ev'ything is wrong,
Seems lak to me de sun done loss his light,	Seems lak to me de day's jes twice as long,
Seems lak to me der's nothin' goin' right,	Seems lak to me de bird's forgot his song
Sence you went away.	Sence you went away.
Seems lak to me de sky ain't half so blue,	Seems lak to me I jes can't he'p but sigh,
Seems lak to me dat ev'rything wants you,	Seems lak to me ma th'oat keeps gittin dry,
Seems lak to me I don't know what to do,	Seems lak to me a tear stays in my eye
Sence you went away.	Sence you went away

William Grant Still Jr. (1895 – 1978), born in Woodville, Mississippi, moved with his widowed mother to Little Rock, Arkansas. When his mother remarried in 1904, Still's stepfather Charles B. Shepperson encouraged his interest in music, taking him to numerous concerts and shows and purchasing records of classical music. He started violin lessons at 15, and taught himself clarinet, saxophone, oboe, double bass, cello, and viola. After graduating high school as the valedictorian, he attended Wilberforce University to study medicine. Leaving the college without graduating, he instead began studying music at Oberlin Conservatory, aided by money left to him by his deceased father. He studied composition with George Andrews, Edgard Varèse, and George Whitfield Chadwick. Widely considered as the Dean of African American Composers and a figure of the Harlem Renaissance, he composed 200 works inclusive of five symphonies, four ballets, nine operas, over thirty choral works, along with numerous art songs, chamber and solo works. **LeRoy V. Brant**, born in 1890, spent most of his life in San Jose as musician, organist, and choral director. He founded the San Jose Municipal Chorus and the San Jose Institute of Music. The poem "Grief" was written in an unpublished letter to William Grant Still inspired by Brant's experience accompanying his music student to a local cemetery. He saw a statue of an angel with his head bowed down and arms folded, weeping.

Grief

LeRoy V. Brant (1890 – 1969)

Weeping angel with pinions trailing
 And head bowed low in your hands.
 Mourning angel with heart-strings
 wailing,
 For one who in death's hall stands.

Mourning angel silence your wailing,
 And raise your head from your hands.
 Weeping angel on your pinions trailing
 The white dove, promise, stands!

Good-Night

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872 – 1906)
 from **Four Romantic Love Songs by**
Adolphus Hailstork

The lark is silent in his nest,
 The breeze is sighing in its flight,
 Sleep, Love, and peaceful be thy rest.
 Good-night, my love, good-night,
 good-night.

Sleep well, my love, on night's dark
 breast,
 And ease thy soul with slumber bright;
 Be joy but thine and I am blest.
 Good-night, my love, good-night, good-
 night.

Sweet dreams attend thee in thy sleep,
 To soothe thy rest till morning's light,
 And angels round thee vigil keep.
 Good-night, my love, good-night,
 good-night.

- SPRING -

Young Love in Spring

Langston Hughes (1901 – 1967)

When the March winds roar like a lion,
And the last little snow flakes drift down
From a half dreary, half happy April sky,
And then lovely May rolls around,
And I walk with you down a country
lane,
We know that spring has come again,
spring has come again.

When the rising sun laughs at the dawn,
And the scent of the soil's warm and
sweet,
And the little green sprouts peep out of
the earth and grow upward,
The sunshine to greet,
And we find a violet beside the way,
We know that spring has come to stay,
spring has come our way.

When I look at you in the haze of the
twilight's last lingering glow,
In the half dusky, half starry evening
sky,
Where sweet scented winds gently
blow,
And our dreams, like birds heading
homeward, soar,
We know that spring has come once
more, spring has come once more.

Poet **Alfred Edward (A. E.) Housman** was born in Fockbury, Worcestershire, England in 1859. In 1877, he enrolled at St. John's College in Oxford where he excelled as a student. Housman failed his final exams, distracted by growing feelings for his roommate Moses Jackson. Despite this, he still passed his last year of college and was employed in London as a patent office worker. During this time he studied Greek and Roman literature and in 1892, received a faculty appointment in Latin at University College in London. In 1911, he transitioned to professor of Latin at Trinity College in Cambridge, a post he occupied until his death in 1936. He published two collections of poetry, *The Shropshire Lad* (1896) and *The Last Poems* (1922). Even though he received much notoriety as a scholar and writer, he lived an unassuming life, avoiding public recognition. "Loveliest of Trees" set by Adolphus Hailstork in 2012 is part of a collection of pieces originally for soprano and harp.

Loveliest of Trees

A. E. Housman (1859 – 1936)

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with blooms along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.
Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

American composer, pianist, organist, and music teacher **Florence B. Price (1887 – 1953)** was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. She received her first musical training from her mother who was a music teacher. At four years of age, she gave her first public piano recital and published her first composition at age 11. She attended school at a Catholic convent, and upon graduating as valedictorian of her class in 1902, she attended New England Conservatory as a double major in organ and piano. To avoid discrimination, her mother encouraged her to pass as Mexican and Price listed her hometown as Pueblo, Mexico. She studied composition from George Whitfield Chadwick and Frederick Converse. After graduation, she returned briefly to Little Rock before moving to Atlanta, Georgia to become the department chair of music at what is now known as Clark Atlanta University. She married her husband in 1912, and they moved back to Little Rock where Thomas J. Price would open his own law practice. After increasing instances of racial discrimination, the Price family moved to Chicago during the Great Migration. During this time, Florence experienced an inspired period of composition, becoming a part of the Chicago Black Renaissance, studying composition, orchestration, and organ from leading teachers in the city. An important success at this time came when her piece *Fantasia nègre* [No. 1] was performed by her student, pianist-composer Margaret Bonds, at the 12th annual National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM) conference in 1930. The first black American woman to have an orchestral piece played by a major orchestra, Price composed over 300 works including four symphonies, four concertos, and numerous choral and solo works, art songs, and chamber music during her lifetime and were influenced by the Harlem Renaissance, neo-Romanticism, and her African American cultural heritage. “Spring” was composed with text by Price herself.

Spring

Florence B. Price (1887 – 1953)

There are promise and pleasure and
hope in the spring,
That beckon, and reckon the future. I
know.
The bud and the bee, swaying low on
the lea,
The dove cooing late.
To his nesting mate.
In a dream of ecstasy.

Ah! There are madness and gladness and
nothing of sadness.
That will me and thrill me and fill me I
know
Life and its weal are to give and to feel
The soul that can ache,
The heart that can break.
With a pain of ecstasy.

There are laughter and magic and joy
in the spring,
That capture, enrapture my heart. I
know.
A lilt on the breeze, That is tossed by
the trees,
Which doth for me weave
Like a thrush above
A song of ecstasy.

Currently a composer and music educator in Chicago, Illinois, **Lena Johnson McLin (b. 1928)** was born in Atlanta, Georgia. Her mother was the Music Director at Greater Mount Calvary Baptist Church and her father was the pastor. McLin directed, composed, and played piano to help her mother in services. Lena learned much about classical music early on because her mother exposed her to symphonic concerts and operas. Her early experience of music was furthered by watching her uncle Thomas A. Dorsey, who was widely known as the father of gospel, compose while she lived with him in Chicago. During this time she also accompanied such well-known singers as Mahalia Jackson and Sallie Martin. McLin received her Bachelor's degree in Music from Spelman College in 1951, and a graduate degree in music from the American Conservatory of Music. She then taught for 36 years in the Chicago public schools. She influenced such artists as R. Kelly, Da Brat, Chaka Khan, Jennifer Hudson, Mark Rucker, Robert Simms, and Tammy McMann. She also founded the McLin Opera Company, the McLin Singers, directed and produced the film *The Origin of the Spiritual* and wrote a book titled *Pulse: A History of Music*. She has composed over 400 works including instrumental and choral works, opera, and art songs. "The Year's at the Spring" with text by Robert Browning was composed in 2002.

Born in 1812 in Camberwell, London, **Robert Browning** was heavily influenced not only by his mother's religious devotion and love of music, but also his father's scholasticism born of a personal library of over 6,000 books. Browning Sr.'s educational pursuits having been dashed by duty to his own father, he enthusiastically supported Browning Jr.'s artistic and scholarly desires. Browning Jr. decided at an early age he wanted to be a poet. He had a slow start to his writing career with the publishing of *Pauline: A Fragment of a Confession* in 1833, which failed to sell. *Paracelsus*, published in 1835, proved to be more successful. One of the foremost poets of the Victorian Era, he was best known for his work's sense of irony and dark humor, characterization, social commentary, historical settings, and challenging vocabulary.

The Year's at the Spring

Robert Browning (1812 – 1889)

The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;

The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world!

Baltimore, Maryland born **Mark Fax (1911 – 1974)** was considered a child prodigy. He was employed by the Regent Theater to play organ for silent films on Saturdays, and gospel music on Sundays by the age of fourteen. He attended Syracuse University to study composition and earned his Bachelor's degree in 1933. From there, continued his study at Eastman Conservatory, earning his Master's degree in composition. The ensuing Depression Era influenced him to turn down fellowships post-graduation, and he accepted a faculty position at Paine College in Georgia where he founded and chaired the music department. He studied piano during this time and wrote music for the Martha Graham Dance Troupe. In 1942, Fax returned to Eastman to study advanced composition. Throughout his life, he composed numerous chamber and choral works, two operas, along with solo voice, piano, and organ repertoire. "Love" is the second piece in Fax's song cycle *Five Black Songs* with text by Jo Ann Harris. This selection melds contrapuntal composition with elements of the avant-garde and jazz by disrupting traditional phrasing along with the utilization of starkly contrasting dynamics and moments of a cappella singing.

Love

Jo Ann Harris

Take my hand and lead me into your mind
Let me trip over all your desires and needs and emotions.
Let me strip you of all that is not completely you.
Let me grow into your soul
As an addition of your contentment and happiness and wonder.
Let me love you and let yourself completely love me.

- SUMMER -

Summer Storm

Langston Hughes (1901 – 1967)

Thunder, July thunder
And the wonder of lightning in the sky,
And the sudden gale that shakes the
blossoms down,
In perfumed splendor to the grassy
ground.

Thunder, July thunder,
And the wonder in my hear that I have
found you,
Wonderful you, beneath the blossoms
gay,
In the perfumed splendor of a July day.

With the wonder of summer lightning in
the sky,
And a sudden gale that shakes the blos-
soms down like confetti in your hair,
Like confetti on the ground,
Perfumed confetti drifting down on the
sweet and wonderful summer earth,
The sweet, sweet summer earth.

There pillowed on the grass in the orchard
shade,
I kissed you, and kissed you, and kissed
you, and kissed you
Till a sudden gale shook the blossoms
down,
Confetti in your hair, confetti on the grond,
And then the rain, the soft sweet rain, came
down.

We run down the road in the dust of July,
We are happy for the rain, clean and cool
from on high,
In the dust, hand in hand, in the dust of
July
Hand in hand, you and I, in July.

Thunder, thunder, in my heart, the wonder
of love,
Thunder, wonder in our eyes:
The wonder of being in love, we two
The wonder of being in love with you.

Harlem Renaissance female poet, playwright, and columnist **Georgia Douglas Johnson** was born in Atlanta, Georgia to a mother of African American and Native American descent and a father of African American and English descent. In her childhood, she was advanced at reading, recitations, and physical education. She also was self-taught at the violin and a lover of music, which is referenced frequently in her writing. She graduated from Atlanta University's Normal School in 1896, and after a short stint of teaching in Marietta, Georgia, decided to attend Oberlin Conservatory to pursue music in 1902. She wrote her own music from 1898-1959. Johnson wrote 200 poems, 28 plays, and 31 short stories during her lifetime. She was one of the earliest African American female playwrights and much of her output touched on love and womanhood.

I selected all three arrangements to highlight the colorful interpretations of *I Want to Die While You Love Me*, my favorite Georgia Douglas Johnson text. The text is organized differently between the three composers, and I perform them in this order to reveal a deepening reverence of these words. In this way, the set of pieces reveals the narrative of an increasingly vulnerable offering of the self to the lover. First of mind, second of body, and lastly of soul.

Harry Thacker Burleigh (1866 – 1949) was born in Erie, Pennsylvania. Taught from an early age by his mother, he was immersed in music, performing in church and town productions. He learned about the American Negro Spiritual from not only his mother, but his maternal grandfather who was enslaved but purchased his freedom. After being awarded a scholarship, Burleigh attended the National Conservatory of Music in New York at 26 years of age. To supplement the scholarship, Burleigh worked as a handyman for the school. While cleaning the Conservatory halls and singing spirituals one day, he caught the attention of Conservatory director and Czech composer Antonín Dvořák, who gained inspiration from the melodies which influenced his Symphony “From the New World” and countless other compositions. Burleigh was instrumental in the development of American music, primarily through his art song compositions. This however was eclipsed by his advocacy for the American Negro Spiritual and his arrangements of spirituals influenced by the compositional tastes of classical music.

Choral composer, singer, professor, and researcher **Rosephanye Dunn Powell (b. 1962)** was born in Lanett, Alabama. She studied piano, played the saxophone, and sang as a child. After graduating valedictorian of her class in 1980, she attended Alabama State University to study music education. She received her Master of Music degree in voice performance and pedagogy from Westminster Choir College in 1987, and finally her Doctor of Music degree from Florida State University in 1993. Prior to focusing on compositional pursuits, she performed recitals and lectured on the music of William Grant Still alongside championing the American Negro Spiritual.

I Want to Die While You Love Me

Georgia Douglas Johnson (1880 – 1966)

I want to die while you love me,
While yet you hold me fair,
While Laughter lies upon my lips
And lights are in my hair.

I want to die while you love me;
Oh, who would care to live
Till love has nothing more to ask
And nothing more to give?

I want to die while you love me
And bear to that still bed
Your kisses turbulent, unspent
To warm me when I'm dead.

I want to die while you love me,
And never, never see
The glory of this perfect day
Grow dim, or cease to be!

- SOLSTICE -

American singer and pianist responsible for influencing the West Coast Blues, **Charles Brown (1922 – 1999)**, was born in Texas City, Texas. He received classical piano training as a child. Upon graduating from high school in Galveston, Texas, he attended Prairie View A&M College, graduating in 1942 with a degree in chemistry. After undergraduate studies, Brown was employed first as a chemistry teacher, next as a mustard gas worker, and finally as an apprentice electrician before moving to Los Angeles during the second phase of the Great Migration. Around the same time a smoother version of blues emerged in the integrated night-club scene. Nat King Cole, most popular for stylizing this kind of blues, was just launching to the national stage when Charles Brown's group Johnny Moore's Three Blazers took his place in L.A. Performing as the front man on piano and vocals, Brown co-wrote the 1945 song "Driftin' Blues" which reached the Billboard charts and stayed there for six months. While he influenced such names as Floyd Dixon, Cecil Gant, Ivory Joe Hunter, Percy Mayfield, Johnny Ace, and Ray Charles, it is a lesser-known fact that he was also an art song composer. *A Song Without Words*, composed in 1974, is a vocalise based on the singing of American gospel blues singer, guitarist, and evangelist Blind Willie Johnson.