

The Memorial Church of Harvard University Music Notes for Sunday, September 25, 2022

Born in England, Healey Willan emigrated to Toronto, Canada, and in 1941 was appointed organist/choirmaster of St. Paul's Anglican Church, Bloor Street of Toronto. In 1921, he became Precentor at Toronto's Anglo-Catholic parish of Saint Mary Magdalene. His cultivation of the Gregorian chant repertoire and publication of numerous compositions for choir and organ made him world famous, influencing several generations of Anglican musicians.

Undine Smith Moore taught at Virginia State University from 1927 until her retirement in 1972. She was a prolific composer of choral works, and her oratorio based on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Scenes from the Life of a Martyr*, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

Jane Marshall's numerous choral and vocal works have been mainstays of the American sacred choral repertoire since the late 1950s, and her original hymn tunes have appeared in most major hymnals. Marshall did not compose any purely instrumental music, and this organ album seeks to fill that gap: arranger Douglas E. Wagner has taken eight of Marshall's choral works and created idiomatic and compelling solo organ pieces from them.

Florence Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas and was educated at the New England Conservatory. After teaching appointments in Arkansas and Atlanta, she settled in Chicago, where her national reputation grew significantly. She was the first African American woman composer to earn widespread national recognition. Her more than 300 works (including *A Pleasant Thought*) include music in many genres and styles, including four orchestral symphonies, alongside numerous vocal and chamber pieces, and many arrangements of popular music for radio. During her time at NEC, Price studied the organ with Henry M. Dunham; her organ output includes several large-scale works as well as short pieces that were written for various publishers of church music.

Dedicated to concert organist Nathan Laube, George Baker's *Évocation II* is a flashy toccata steeped in the French School of improvisation. The work is given the subtitle "April 22, 1984," the date of Pierre Cochereau's death: the haunting, enigmatic tonalities are rooted in octatonicism, characteristic of Cochereau's improvisations. The piece begins with the 8- and 4-foot foundation stops of the Fisk organ and gradually builds to a deafening tutti by the end; throughout the work, three Passiontide chants are referenced which build to a rousing climax in E major.