

Earnest Lamb

An African-American Triptych

William Grant Still's Symphony No. 1 ("Afro-American"), which is the composer's best known work, has garnered some semblance of mainstream recognition: it has been performed and recorded by world class orchestras; it has been discussed in music history books and its score included in anthologies; and the symphony has become a perennial favorite during Black History Month. Through these and other venues, the symphony's list of "firsts" has become familiar territory. While the *Afro-American Symphony* deserves recognition for what it is and what it has come to represent, Still believed that it fell short of "presenting a great truth that [would] be of value to mankind in general."¹ When he wrote it, Still did not consider this symphony to be his *magnum opus*, a status that it has taken on since his death. Consequently, Still's reputation rests on the reception of a single work that does not and cannot address the scope and range of his symphonic output in terms of compositional process or aesthetic ideals. Still wrote four more symphonies during his long career, and all four have been eclipsed by the *Afro-American Symphony*. These works seem too significant in the composer's oeuvre to remain in the long shadows cast by a single work.

Since Still first came to international attention as a symphonic composer, it should be of interest to learn more about the works that came before and after it in order to assess his full contribution to the American symphonic tradition. The tone poem *Africa*, Symphony No. 1 ("Afro-American"), and Symphony No. 2 ("Song of a New Race"), works that comprise a symphonic trilogy, would be a natural starting point for such an inquiry. The challenge, of course, is to discover territory that has not already been explored so well by so many. Still's writings, especially the programs he provided, have guided the direction, scope and nature of this discourse. As valuable as these primary sources are to Still scholarship, they tend to form well-worn pathways to familiar destinations. As a result, equally rewarding musical vistas are seldom appreciated because they lie off the beaten path.

Dance and its rhythms are two areas overlooked in most exegeses on the trilogy. This is not surprising. African American dance, both social and concert, has been one of the least explored aspects of the Harlem

Renaissance. This is ironic because the spectacular dancing in the all-black musical *Shuffle Along* (1921), not literature, is most often cited as the catalyst for the cultural renaissance that took place in Harlem. I will argue that African American social dances such as the Charleston and the Black Bottom not only achieved mainstream popularity, they informed the compositional choices Still made. As I examine the trilogy for evidence of dance and its rhythms, it becomes necessary to put Still's program aside momentarily in order to open a space wide enough to advance my argument. Thus, my discussion is divided into two unequal parts. First, I will examine the influence of dance forms on each work; and then, secondly, I will address the broader question of how well these individual works form a group.

I.

By the time Still was making a living as a professional musician in New York, dancing had become a national pastime. Americans from all social strata had always enjoyed dancing socially, but it was the popular and commercial successes of ragtime and ragtime dances that prompted Sigmund Spaeth to conclude that the "the decade between 1910 and 1920

[was] the period in which America went dance wild."² Ragtime animal dances such as the Grizzly Bear, Turkey Trot, Bunny Hug and Fox Trot, which called for close body contact and other movements that were deemed too indecorous for their time, were gentrified and made more acceptable to whites through the efforts of such dance teams as Irene and Vernon Castle. For the first time, African American dances, which had previously been too "characteristic" or "eccentric," were now popular with white America. Interest in African American dances continued after ragtime ceased to be popular. Black musicals like *Runnin' Wild* (1923) and *Dinah* (1924) introduced two African American dances—the Charleston and the Black Bottom—that triggered white Manhattan's nightly crawl to such Harlem establishments as the Plantation Club, the Cotton Club, and the Savoy. Together, these venues helped create an appetite for African American social dances that went unabated well into the 1940s.

Alain Locke and other cultural arbiters of the period could not ignore how dancing had become an integral part of American cultural and musical life. In *The Negro and His Music* (1936), Locke agreed with James Weldon Johnson that the "basis for American music has for the most part been laid down by the figures, rhythm, and tempo of Negroid dances."³ Locke supports his statement by listing some of the most popular black dances from the "buck and wing" of the antebellum period "down to the humble, but contagious contemporary 'truckin'" that have become a part of American culture. "But what of it, from the point of view of serious music?" Locke ponders. Locke compares the appropriation of "Negro folk things that [began] on plantations, levees and cabarets" with the elevation of the once lowly waltz into symphonic proportions and imagines a time when the Negro idiom will "triumphantly invade in turn the stage, the ballroom, the salon, and finally the musical conservatories."⁴

Locke was correct in his prediction. African American social dances did eventually “invade” the “musical conservatories.” This invasion, however, was precipitated by the growing interest in primitive culture as the most visceral and salubrious antidote for a Western European musical tradition in decline. While primitivism offered hope for redemption, primitivism was polemical for many Harlem Renaissance artists. First, how could they vindicate Africa without contributing to and reinforcing the *idea* of Africa as a primitive “other.” Secondly, how could African American artists move beyond essentialism in order to realize their full potential as “universal” artists. By the time Still composed *Africa* (1930) and *Sahdji* (1931), the promise of primitivism had been reduced to a set of stereotypes, essential gestures and musical clichés. It was the perceived atavism of *Africa* and *Sahdji*, that contributed to the initial success of these two works. Because Still was of African descent, the critics assumed he must have had access to some unadulterated primordial source of inspiration. “Mr. Still’s music,” wrote one reviewer of “Land of Romance” from *Africa*, “came from the fertile soil of the jungle and it borrowed only the laws of logic in form from the ways of the white man.”⁵ *Sahdji*, wrote Olin Downes, hadn’t been “diluted with conventions of the white, nor cast in the forms of Negroid expression which has also become conventional. Mr. Still does not indulge in Harlem jazz, but harks back to more primitive sources for brutal, persistent and barbaric rhythms.”⁶ Presently, such comments would give one reason to pause; still, it is a reminder that primitivism created a market interest in African Americans, as displaced primitives, that drew whites to such Harlem night spots as the Cotton Club and Connie’s Inn for music and dancing.

The “persistent and barbaric rhythms” that Mr. Downes identified in *Sahdji* were probably the melodic and rhythmic ostinati used throughout the ballet. In the tone poem *Africa*, Still also uses ostinati to “convey the idea that the race has not yet shaken off primitive beliefs, despite the influence of civilization.”⁷ That Still came to associate ostinati with primitivism seems to be related to his newly developed “harmonic scheme” as describe by Verna Arvey in 1939. According to Arvey, *From the Black Belt* (1926) onward, her husband “conceived an idea which has ever since been evident in his works . . . He began to base each composition on a different harmonic scheme . . . [and tried] to express moods, story, even thoughts by means of harmonies.”⁸ Considering the proximity of their genesis, *Africa* and *Sahdji* appear to be cut from the same cloth. Both use tom-toms as a means to evoke the spirit of Africa. Both use ostinati, a compositional technique that is absent from the remainder of his oeuvre, as a way to organize a piece of music harmonically and structurally. Both represent “an American Negro’s wholly fanciful concept of the cradle of his Race.”⁹ *Africa*, then, has more in common with *Sahdji* and other “primitive” ballets from the period, such as *La Création du monde* or *Le Sacre du printemps*, than it has with African American social dances.

While melodic and rhythmic ostinati are the basis for each movement

of *Africa* (1935 version), I'll limit my discussion to the "Land of Peace," the first movement of the tone poem. In general, Still uses ostinati structurally. Changes in melodic contour or rhythmic profile of an ostinato coincide with the appearance of a new theme. I refer to the relationship between an ostinato and its theme as an episode. Because each episode is essentially an independent unit, they can be used like building blocks to construct a movement of any length. Still then cements these blocks together with transitional material that does not contain any repetitive patterns. Essentially, the movement is episodic, rather than developmental, because it does not depend upon thematic recurrences to delineate form. Perhaps, it was this additive construction that prompted one reviewer to comment that, "'Land of Peace' seems a bit too long, extending beyond its climax."¹⁰

The first movement is a veritable catalog of how to employ the technique in a piece of music. Initially, Still places the ostinato in a subordinate role to its theme. After a solo tom-tom introduction, an ostinato pattern of simple eighth notes appears in the strings (Example 1a). These eighth-note chords are non-functional and merely serve to continue the percussive effect of the tom-toms. At other times, Still breaks up the ostinato pattern among several instruments of different tone colors in a hocket-like fashion. Sometimes the ostinato is no more than a double pedal point with rhythm added to maintain interest. While the ostinato usually appears in the lower voices, occasionally a pattern is placed in the upper register of the orchestra. Perhaps the most dramatic effect occurs near the end of the movement when Still creates a polyrhythmic climax by stacking one ostinato on top of the other (Example 1b).

Although completed and given its premier in 1930, *Africa* is based on sketches dating as early as 1924 when Still was a student of Edgar Varèse.¹¹ Even though Still would later turn his back on ultra-modernism, the work maintains, even after numerous revisions, vestiges of Varèse's style: "wide spacing of dissonant harmonies, tone clusters, concern for timbre, dynamic contrast, repetition of pitches, complex multiple rhythms and disjunct melody."¹² So while the subject of *Africa* might be primitive, its harmonic language is anything but. The *Land of Peace* is based on quartal harmony, illustrated for instance, in the fingernail pizzicato chords that occur in the introduction comprised of superimposed fourths. The melodic contour of the opening flute solo is limited by the interval of a fourth between the notes D and G (Example 1a). Often the double pedal points and divisi within instrumental groups are based on fourths or tritones. Rather than diluting the Negroid idiom, the modern style helped create the "startling, unspoken fears, [and] lurking terrors" that were an expression of Still's "harmonic scheme."¹³ Together, ostinati and the modernist style created the fantasy of an untamed and uncivilized continent.

Alain Locke probably had the *Afro-American Symphony* in mind when he predicted that dances "that began on plantations, levees and cabarets" would eventually become a part of the American symphonic tradition. In-

Flute 1

tom-tom

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Bass

Example 1a. Africa, “Land of Peace,” Lento, mm. 6–11

deed, one *Manchester Guardian* critic’s assessment that “Still’s African Symphony [sic] contains some rather clever treatment of dance rhythms”¹⁴ seems to support Locke’s position. Other critics identified dance elements in the symphony as well. According to David Kessler, Still’s symphony

The image displays a partial musical score for the piece "Land of Peace" from the opera "Africa". The score is arranged in a system with six staves. The top staff is for the Soprano voice, followed by two staves for the Woodwind section (likely Flute and Oboe), and then four staves for the String section (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). The woodwind parts feature a steady, continuous series of eighth notes, creating a rhythmic texture. The string parts provide harmonic support with various melodic and harmonic lines. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff* (fortissimo) and *p* (piano), and articulation marks like accents and slurs. The notation is in standard musical notation with clefs, key signatures, and time signatures.

Example 1b, Africa, "Land of Peace, mm 150–153 (partial score). A steady series of eighth-notes in the woodwind parts adds yet another layer to the rhythmic texture.

“sometimes shuffles its feet, at other times dances and sways often in the barbaric rhythm of its subject.”¹⁵ The third movement was dismissed as “[not] much more than a clever fox trot”¹⁶ by one reviewer while another was reminded of “laughter and dancing in the night.”¹⁷ Because of Still’s extensive work as a performer or arranger for some of the most popular musicals, revues, and band leaders of his day, it would not be unreasonable to find dance forms “invading” a symphony called the *Afro-American*. While specific dances are seldom called by name, with the exception of the “clever fox trot” misidentified by the reviewer, the first and third movements of the symphony are informed by such African American dances as the slow drag, black bottom, Charleston, cakewalk and juba.

I will discuss the dances most closely associated with the blues before addressing the ante-bellum dances of the third movement. Although much has been said about Still “elevating” the blues to symphonic proportions, Albert Murray cautions that there is nothing “more misleading than the standard dictionary emphasis on gloomy lyrics, the so-called blue notes, and slow tempo—as if blues music were originally composed to be performed as concert music.”¹⁸ Murray claims that “whatever else it [the blues] was used for it was always mostly dance music.”¹⁹ From its inception, then, the blues was virtually synonymous with dancing. In *The Land Where the Blues Began*, Alan Lomax describes how his father, John, first encountered the blues, a.k.a. the slow drag:

in 1902, when my father was recording on the Brazos River, a white planter, swearing him to secrecy, took him far out in the bottoms to a tightly shuttered sharecropper cabin, where they were allowed to peep in and see the black tenants doing “the blues” or “the slow drag,” a dance considered to be so obscene that my father never told my mother about it until years afterward.²⁰

Years later, Alan describes being taken to a juke joint deep in the Delta where he also witnessed couples performing the blues or the slow drag:

couples, glued together in a belly-to-belly, loin-to-loin embrace, [that] approximated sexual intercourse as closely as their vertical posture, their clothing, and the crowd around them would allow. Slowly, with bent knees and with the whole shoe soles flat to the floor, they dragged their feet along its surface, emphasizing the offbeat, so that the whole house vibrated like a drum.²¹

From these descriptions, we can conclude that: 1) the slow drag was another term for the blues; 2) the dance was considered to be highly erotic; 3) the tempo of the dance had to be somewhat slow in order to accommodate the flat-footed steps and to allow maximum physical contact between partners; and 4) the accentuation of the offbeat was an important characteristic of both dance and music.

The black bottom was another dance associated with the blues. According to Pauline Norton, it was popular in the juke joints in the black

section of Nashville called the “Bottoms” in the early as 1900s.²² Originally, the black bottom was danced to the 12-bar blues and, according to the lyrics in Perry Bradford’s “The Original Black Bottom Dance” (1919), the dance contained the signature rhythmic profile of the Charleston during the offbeats:

Now listen folks, open your ears,
This rhythm you will hear—
Charleston was on the afterbeat—
Old Black Bottom’ll make you shake your feet.²³

Apparently, both the Charleston and the black bottom were known in the black community years before they were introduced to a wider audience via the Broadway musicals of the 1920s. The black bottom achieved theatrical success when it appeared in the musical *Shuffle Along* (1921) and a few years later in *Dinah* (1924). However, it was not until it was introduced by Ann Pennington in *George White’s Scandal of 1926* that the dance

The image shows a page from a musical score for "Example 2, Afro-American Symphony, I. Moderato assai ('Longing'), mm 6-10". The score is written for a large orchestra, including woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings. The instruments listed on the left are OBOE (1, 2), ENGLISH HRN., CLARINET (1), BASS CLAR., BASSOON, HORN (1, 3, 4), TRUMPET (1, 2), TROMBONE (1, 2, 3), TIMPANI, SMALL CYMBAL, BASS DRUM, HARP, 1ST. VLNS., 2ND. VLNS., VIOLAS, 'CELLI, and BASSES. The score features various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as "a Tempo", "SOLO", "Harmon mutes", "Soft stick", "p", "f", "pp", "pizz.", and "arco". There are also section markers with the number "2" in a box. The notation is in a standard musical format with a key signature of one flat and a time signature of 4/4.

Example 2, Afro-American Symphony, I. Moderato assai (“Longing”),
mm 6–10

achieved widespread popularity.²⁴ It appears that this performance also spawned a number of recordings. Eight recordings of songs with the title “Black Bottom” appeared that year alone and others were recorded as late as 1937.²⁵ Some notable versions include “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom” and Jelly Roll Morton’s “Black Bottom Stomp.” The dance even made its way to Hollywood. In the film *Coquette* (1929), former silent screen star Mary Pickford plays a Southern belle who, during the course of the film, attempts to distance herself from her “America’s Sweetheart” image by dancing the sultry black bottom.

So while Still presents the blues as concert music, it remains rooted in the dance. Of the dances discussed, the black bottom is the dance most likely associated with the first movement. The rather involved steps of this dance call for side-to-side sliding steps, hopping back and forth, twisting motions similar to the shimmy, and playfully slapping the rear end.²⁶ These steps were done to the 12-bar blues which, according to the lyrics in Bradford’s song, included a Charleston rhythm on the weak beats. All of these elements can be found in the opening statement of the blues theme from the first movement (Example 2). After the initial six measure English horn solo, Still writes a classic 12-bar blues for muted trumpet. As expected, the AAB statements are reinforced harmonically by the following blues progression: I–IV–V⁷–I. What happens on the “after beats” between statements of the blues theme is interesting. In call-and-response fashion, the horns answer the muted trumpet with a Charleston rhythm on the “after beat” just as Bradford’s song describes. Bradford’s use of the rhythm, two dotted notes of equal value written in syncopation against the meter, suggests that it was an established rhythmic gesture for the dance by the time James P. Johnson incorporated it into his version of the song. Other elements that correspond to the steps of the dance are also present. The slurred strings imitate the side-to-side sliding motions of the dance while the timpani and bass simulate the hopping steps. In the second statement of the blues theme, when the strings imitate the strum of a guitar, one can imagine the dancers, with hands on hips, gently slapping their backsides. By re-establishing the relationship between dance and music, it becomes apparent that Still’s compositional choices were influenced, indeed determined, by the steps of the black bottom.

While using elements of the blues to express longing fits the program of a symphony that “offered a composite musical portrait of those Afro-Americans who have not responded completely to the cultural influences of today,”²⁷ the dance element, specifically the black bottom, makes that portraiture more contemporary rather than merely an antebellum historical reference. The black bottom signifies, as it does in the film *Coquette*, an urban sophistication that belies its southern agrarian roots. Additionally, many blues lyrics were notorious for innuendo. Perhaps, then, the subtitle of “Longing” that Still attached to the first movement is a kind of double entendre. In one sense, the blues represents the noble suffering of a people longing for a better life free from oppression, but longing can have a sexual

connotation as well. Considering the licentiousness of the slow drag and, later, the black bottom, Still's appropriation of the blues would have been more accurately read as provocative rather than "corny" as one *New York Times* critique called the work in 1976.²⁸ So, the blues created an apparent contradiction between Still's program and his "harmonic scheme." Perhaps realizing his own contradiction, Still found his original program for the work to be "inadequate."²⁹ (The program had been written *after* the piece was completed.)

A similar contradiction occurs in the third movement which is also dance inspired. Given the subtitle "Humor," the third movement is more often referred to as a Scherzo. Interestingly, it does not follow the classic formulae of such a movement being in duple meter, rather than triple, and lacking a contrasting trio section. Rather, it maintains the jocular spirit of its Italian genealogy while functioning as a substitute for the traditional dance movement in a symphony. In this case, the juba, a plantation dance is the substitution. However, this dance appears to contradict the religiosity suggested by the couplet taken from Paul Laurence Dunbar's "An Ante-bellum Sermon" and the accretion "expressed through religious fervor." The juba is closely aligned with minstrelsy rather than religious worship no matter how demonstrative the service. Furthermore, the banjo, which often accompanied the dance, would hardly have been part of anyone's religious service.

Still, using the juba as the inspiration for a dance movement is in keeping with Still's "harmonic scheme" to portray a people not far removed from the Civil War. The juba, along with other "characteristic" dances like the buck and wing, Virginia essence, and cakewalk, was an integral part of the minstrel show. By the 1850s, the components of the minstrel show had become standardized into a three-part structure—the first part, the olio, and the afterpiece. It was during the final "walk-arounds" in the afterpiece that juba, and later, the cakewalk would be performed. Douglas Gilbert gives an account of how the "walk-around" was done:

At a chord from the orchestra, the company rose to their feet. As the orchestra began a lively tune in 2/4 time, one of the company would step down stage from the semi-circle, walk around for sixteen bars of the music and do one step of a reel, finish with a break, then resume his place in the semicircle as another stepped out and repeated the performance, varying, though, with a different step.³⁰

This account resembles what happens musically in the third movement of the symphony. After an introduction built on a dominant pedal, the orchestra begins a rousing tune in duple meter with a tenor banjo accompaniment for the sixteen bars. This is followed by a re-orchestration of the first eight measures of the theme and then an eight bar "break," which I call the Indian War Dance music, to close the period.

The re-orchestration of limited melodic material is characteristic of

minstrel music. According to Clayton Henderson, minstrel melodies are often based on rather simple melodic motifs whose accompaniment is rhythmically complex. Furthermore, minstrel songs are, in the main, pentatonic or at least anhemitonic, triadic, and confined to narrow ranges.³¹ The principal themes Still uses in this enigmatic movement follow this format. The main theme is distinguished by a distinctive head motif whose melodic contour is defined by a descending major/minor third followed by an ascending perfect fourth or minor sixth. This head motif is then incorporated into themes that are relatively narrow in range, triadic and avoid semi-tones. Still often used this motif in call-and-response fashion as if imitating the question and answer routine between the interlocutor and his end men.

If we consider for a moment that Still was writing a dance movement based on the conventions of minstrel music, then the rather static harmonic plane and peculiar lack of melodically contrasting formal markers begin to make sense. The traditional scherzo calls for a tripartite division supported by contrasting themes and tonality. This scherzo, instead, appears to follow the demands of a challenge dance whose only musical requirements are a simple vamp-like tune that allows the dancer ample opportunity for display. Thus, the key center seldom ventures very far from A-flat major for very long, and the structure of the movement is episodic rather than developmental. Each episode, then, re-orchestrated more brilliantly than the last, is analogous to one dancer after another taking his turn in the spotlight.

Rhythm, naturally, would have been an important element of the dance. In the minstrel tradition, rhythmic complexity would have compensated for any lack of melodic interest. As if to mimic the complicated step patterns and “pattin” that would have been a part of the juba dancer’s exhibition of skill, Still supplies his memorable, yet simple, tune with a polyrhythmic accompaniment. By grouping the instruments according to family then writing a different rhythmic pattern for each, Still is able to create a multi-layered rhythmic accompaniment that becomes especially intricate with each appearance of the banjo scored just above the strings (Example 3). Superimposing “blocks” of rhythmic patterns on top of each other seems to be Still’s method of creating rhythmic complexity. He uses this technique in *Africa* and again in the third movement of his second symphony.

Gestures associated with the Charleston might have been incorporated into the improvised steps of the juba as well. Although, the dance is believed to have originated in Charleston, South Carolina in the early twentieth century, it may have had an even earlier incarnation as part of an antebellum challenge dance called juba. Accounts from the period describe the juba as an elaborate jig that was often accompanied by the banjo, but more often self-accompanied by slapping parts of the body called “pattin” juba.³² In her article “Juba and American Minstrelsy,” Marian Hunter Winter believes one of the elaborate “variations—crossing and uncrossing the hands against the kneecaps which fanned back and forth—was

This musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes parts for Flute 1, Flute 2, Oboe 1, English Horn, Bass Clarinet, Alto Clarinet 1, Bass Clarinet 2, Bass Clarinet, Saxophone 1, Horn 1-2, Horn 3-4, Baritone 1, Trombone 1, Trombone 2-3, and Tuba. The second system includes parts for Horn 1-2, Horn 3-4, Baritone 1, Trombone 1, Trombone 2-3, and Tuba. The score contains various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *ff* and *sf*. The instruments are listed vertically on the left side of each system.

The musical score is presented in a standard orchestral format. The top section includes the Timpani and Cymbals parts, which play a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. Below this, the string sections are divided into Violins I, Violins II, Violas, Cellos, and Contrabasses. The Violins I and II parts feature a melodic line with a variety of rhythmic values, including eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes. The Viola, Cello, and Contrabasso parts provide a harmonic foundation with sustained notes and rhythmic patterns. The score includes dynamic markings such as *sf* (sforzando) and *f* (forte), indicating moments of increased intensity. The overall texture is dense and rhythmic, characteristic of a Scherzo movement.

Example 3, Afro-American Symphony, "Scherzo," mm. 87-91

incorporated in the Charleston of the 1920s.”³³ Other authors also consider the Charleston to be a direct descendant of the juba.³⁴ This suggests another reason for the appearance of the controversial “quotation” of George Gershwin’s *I Got Rhythm* in the opening measures of the movement.³⁵ The rhythmic profile of this tune is that of the Charleston which, by the 1920s, had become endemic in popular music. Furthermore, Still’s usage of this rhythmic gesture is idiomatic. That is, each time the rhythm appears in the first and third movements, it is placed in the gaps of the main theme; and both times it appears as part of music inspired by dancing. So its appearance in the opening of the Scherzo could just as well signify a specific dance step as well as Still “signifyin’” on Gershwin.

While the *Afro-American Symphony* was written by a New Negro, hailed as a historical and musical first for black America, and revered as a symbol of racial progress by the leadership of the Harlem Renaissance, I doubt if the public, which was mainly white, could have fully appreciated its significance. When the symphony was given its premier in 1931, its audience would have attributed Dunbar’s poetry and musical references to spirituals and minstrelsy as homage to the Old South. The Old South, romanticized as a place of benevolent masters and happy slaves content in their bondage, was a popular trope that remained in the public’s imagination well into the 1930s. Musicals like *Show Boat* (1927-29), the re-releases of *Birth of a Nation* (1924, 1931, 1938), the premier of *Gone With the Wind* (1939), along with popular entertainment venues like The Plantation Club and The Cotton Club, give some indication of how prevalent this trope was in American popular culture. Nostalgia for a period now “gone with the wind” might explain the success of the Scherzo, as minstrel show, detached from the body of the symphony.

The last work in the trilogy is the Symphony No. 2 in G Minor, (“Song of a New Race”). Written during Still’s universal period, the second symphony received mixed reviews after its premier in 1937 by the Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of Leopold Stokowski. While the second symphony was generally panned, reviewers like Stewart Sabin of the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* found the two middle movements to be the best.³⁶ It is likely that critics and audience alike could not comprehend the abstraction of the first and last movements, but they found the popular dance forms of the second and third movements familiar territory. Because the slow movement represents the “song” of the subtitle, I will limit my discussion of this symphony to this movement.

Traditionally slow movements of symphonies were commonly written in sonata form, theme and variations or modeled after an aria type. While the general form for the entire movement resembles a sonata, Still creates a form within a form by nesting the ballad structure, discussed below within the context of a sonata. By placing the song form prominently at the start of the movement, its harmonic and melodic structure can easily be recognized. Thus, its presence can be doubly interpreted as either the first theme in sonata form or as a song without words.

According to Charles Hamm, the ballad form of the 1920s consisted of one or two verses that “set the stage” for the 32 bar chorus that followed. By the 1930s, changes were made to the genre that reflected the technical limitations of the recording, radio, and the popularity of dancing. First, in order to accommodate the time and space limitations of radio and 78 rpm recordings, the verses were dropped. What remained were choruses consisting of four phrases set in one of the following patterns: AABA, ABAB, ABCA, or AABC. Harmonically, songwriters during this period became increasingly daring. Songs with rapid and remote modulations, chromatically altered chords, triads with added notes, and even ninth chords began to appear with greater regularity.³⁷ Finally, in order for a song to be considered truly successful, it had to be danceable. Thus, most songs were written in four bar phrases and duple meter, including enough dance rhythms to accentuate the steps.

The opening 36 bars of this movement closely follow the formal, melodic and rhythmic characteristics of the ballad as just described. As expected for songs from this period, Still drops the opening “verse” and begins the movement with a “chorus” of eight bar phrases cast in an AABA pattern. The strings and woodwinds alternately “sing” the first two phrases. Then a contrasting B section of twelve bars in the same key of G major prepares the return of the first eight measures of the main theme. This time the main theme is delicately scored for solo violin, harp and strings. All of this happens within a span of 36 six bars, four more than the standard 32. Melodically, the theme is triadic, diatonic and conjunct—all elements that make a song more singable. Indeed, the opening four measures are no more than a descending fifth that establishes the key followed by an ascending scale and a simple triad to finish off the phrase (Example 4). Each successive phrase becomes more harmonically complex. Whereas the A sections are predominately diatonic, the B section is harmonically adventurous. Blue notes, chromatically altered chords, seventh and ninth chords appear in a densely orchestrated fabric of divisi and doublings that create a lush contrast to the A sections.

Although this movement is based on one of the popular song forms, its rhythm is determined by one of the most popular dances of the period—the fox trot. Of the ragtime animal dances, the fox trot was the only dance to make the transition from “the stage, the ballroom, the salon, and finally the musical conservatories” successfully. Attributed to the vaudevillian entertainer Harry Fox, the foxtrot was one of the many animal dances, such as the turkey trot, grizzly bear, and the bunny hug, that were danced to the syncopated and dotted rhythms of ragtime. In the hands of the dance team Vernon and Irene Castle, the fox trot appeared to facilitate the transition from a popular musical style in decline, ragtime, and the emergence of a new style, the blues. In his autobiography, *Father of the Blues*, W.C. Handy gives a brief history lesson on how the fox trot was created:

The musical score is for a full orchestra, including Flute 1, B♭ Clarinet 1, B♭ Clarinet 2, Clarinet 3, Harp, Violin 1, Violin 2, Violin 3, Viola, Cello, and Contrabass. The key signature is G minor (three flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The score shows measures 1 through 4. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *nt* (no timbre). There are also markings for '3' (triplets) and 'nt' (no timbre) in various measures.

Example 4, Symphony in G Minor, *mvmt. 2*, *mm. 1–4*

Jim Europe, head of the local Clef Club was [Irene and Vernon] Castle's musical director. The Castle Walk and one-step were fast numbers. During the breath-catching intermission, Jim would sit at the piano and play slowly the "Memphis Blues: A Southern Rag." He did this so often that the Castles became intrigued by its rhythm and Jim asked why they didn't originate a slow dance adaptable to it. The Castles liked the idea and a new dance [foxtrot] was introduced.³⁸

Rather than a new invention, the fox trot was an old dance in transition. By the 1930s, the fox trot was no longer a trotting type dance nor was it a dance associated with the blues like the slow drag or black bottom. Thanks to dancers like Fred Astaire and Arthur Murray, the fox trot was transformed into a smoothly elegant dance whose long gliding step combinations were versatile enough to accommodate any popular song in moderate tempo. Unlike the slow drag, the fox trot was dignified in deportment. In *The Complete Book of Ballroom Dancing*, the authors describe the dancer's carriage as erect with soft knees and with little motion above the hips. Instead of heavy flat-footed steps, "the heels led on slow forward steps while all quick steps took place on the balls of the feet. Also charac-

teristic of the fox trot was the *brush* step. When making a step to the side, the free foot brushes the supporting foot and then steps directly to the side."³⁹

Like the Charleston, the fox trot also has its own rhythmic signature: slow-quick-quick rhythm in a moderate to slow 4/4 meter. The accent is on the first beat with a lesser accent on the third. While there are other rhythmic combinations, this is the most basic and it becomes obvious that Still must have had this particular rhythmic gesture in mind while composing this movement. The fox trot rhythm, which would have called for the promenade or Westchester step, is clearly outlined at the onset of the movement (Example 5). Indeed, the opening eight measures are virtually homorhythmic to such an extent that the fox trot rhythm is an essential part of the melodic contour and not just an accompanimental figure. He also must have had the smooth gliding steps of the dance in mind as he created the melody. Not only does he indicate that the opening theme be played smoothly, the syncopation in the second measure would have accentuated the characteristic *brush* step of the fox trot while the *ritardando* at the end of the fourth would have accommodated a particularly elegant pose.

It appears that Still used dance forms in his trilogy in a number of ways. If a dance form could be closely associated with a song, then the song form would appear as a first theme in a sonata type movement. The 12-bar blues form of the first movement of the *Afro-American Symphony* or the ballad form of the G Minor Symphony's slow movement are exemplars. If a movement was conceived as an instrumental accompaniment to a dance, then the form would be episodic. *Africa*, the Scherzo, and the third movement of the Second Symphony follow this pattern. These movements do not develop organically, rather they are extended by adding new themes or by re-orchestrating a few; thus, the consistency in key, tempo, and meter in these movements. Both usages, however, address the problem of extending short forms, common to popular music, into symphonic proportions that determined the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic choices Still made during the compositional process. Finally, the more recognizable the dance form, the more the work was perceived to be racial. The juba, Charleston, black bottom, and the fox trot originated in the African American community and their appropriation made Still's symphonic works obviously racial. Conversely, his G Minor Symphony contained a dance (fox trot) that had gone through so many transformations that it was no longer recognizable as African American in origin. Consequently, the initial reviews of the work reflect the confused responses to the symphony's obvious, or missing, racial markers.

The dance elements in these works bring up another issue that should be obvious, but nevertheless warrants comment. Popular music from the 1920s through the 1940s, like current popular music, was intended for dancing.⁴⁰ Indeed, a song created by any Tin Pan Alley tunesmith of the day wasn't considered successful unless it could be arranged instrumen-

Example 5, Symphony No. 2, "Scherzo," mm. 1-7

The musical score is arranged in ten staves, each corresponding to a different instrument. The instruments are: Piccolo, Flute 1, Flute 2, Oboe 1, Oboe 2, English Horn, B♭ Clarinet 1, B♭ Clarinet 2, Bass Clarinet, and Bassoon 1. The key signature is two flats (B♭ and E♭), and the time signature is 4/4. The score shows the first seven measures of the piece. The Piccolo, Flute 1, Flute 2, Oboe 1, Oboe 2, and English Horn all play a similar melodic line in the first measure, which is marked with a forte (f) dynamic. This line is then repeated by the B♭ Clarinet 1, B♭ Clarinet 2, and Bass Clarinet in the second measure, also marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The Bassoon 1 plays a similar line in the third measure, marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The score continues with various other instruments playing different lines, including a piano (p) line in the fourth measure. The score ends with a final measure in the seventh measure, marked with a forte (f) dynamic.

Score for *An African-American Triptych*, page 83. The score is written for a large ensemble, including Horns, Trumpets, Trombones, Percussion, and Strings.

Instrumentation:

- Horns 1-2
- Horns 3-4
- 1st Trumpet 1
- 1st Trumpet 2-3
- Trombone 1-2
- Trombone 3
- Timpani
- Small Cymbal
- Large Snare Cymbal
- Tenor Drums
- Harp
- Violin 1
- Violin 2
- Viola
- Cello
- Double Basses

Key Features:

- The score is written in 4/4 time.
- The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor).
- The score includes various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings (e.g., *f*, *mf*).
- The score is divided into systems, with each system containing staves for different instruments.
- The score includes a large section of music for the Horns and Trumpets, followed by a section for the Trombones and Percussion, and finally a section for the Strings.

tally for dancing. Popular music from between the wars, then, was virtually synonymous with dancing. In the fifty or so years since the heyday of the big bands and opulent dance halls in which they performed, the relationship between the music and dancing has been severed. Consequently, we listen to the trilogy with twenty-first-century ears and fail to appreciate the choices in harmony, phrasing, melody, rhythm, and meter, according to dance types, that audiences from earlier decades surely recognized. Dance and its rhythms, then, not only change how one “hears” the trilogy, they promise to enrich our understanding of how American composers between World Wars I and II attempted to make their music sound distinctly American.

II.

The first mention of a symphonic trilogy appears in the 1939 biography of Still by the composer’s wife, Verna Arvey:

Africa, the *Afro-American Symphony* and the *Symphony in G Minor* comprise a trilogy of works whose composition occupied their creator over a period of years, during which time other works were also written and played. Perhaps most intellectual young American Negroes think much about their African background. William Grant Still’s meditations on this subject took musical form.⁴¹

Verna Arvey was correct in thinking that many “intellectual American Negroes” were concerned about their African cultural inheritance. The historicism of Still’s trilogy is a product of period of African American intellectual thought that attempted to record the progress of the race through incremental, linear, and chronological narratives. Each work in the trilogy represents a progression from the homeland (*Africa*), to slavery and emancipation (*Afro American Symphony*), to the present (*Song of a New Race*). Each work, then, is like a Jacob Lawrence history series or a tableaux in a Meta Fuller diorama; and each sub-title or program is like a caption to help the musically illiterate listener understand the progression of musical events. To separate Still’s trilogy, then, is to disrupt the linear flow of its program.

While the historicism of the program is of some benefit, I believe it stifles, rather than promotes, discourse in ways that limit how we hear these works. I hope to shift the discourse by asking a simple question: How well do *Africa*, the *Afro-American Symphony*, and *Song of a New Race* actually work as a trilogy?⁴² This one question, of course, leads to others: Is the historical narrative of the African Diaspora strong enough to adhere one work to another? Is there evidence of long range planning? That is, can the development of a motif or theme be traced from piece to piece? Or does each work within the trilogy represent a particular stylistic period for the composer?

While it may be seductive to group these works into a trilogy, the early

performance history of them undermines such an interpretation. Still's program notes usually initiate most discussions of this kind. Individual movements from *Africa* and the *Afro-American Symphony* were extracted, arranged, and performed separately without any apparent regard for maintaining continuity within or between works. For example, *The Land of Superstition* and *The Land of Romance* were most often extracted from *Africa* for performance during Still's lifetime. Additionally, Still revised or reworked the tone poem at least five times: it exists in both full and chamber orchestra versions; in a piano reduction; and in an arrangement (*The Land of Superstition*) for Paul Whiteman and his orchestra. Currently the entire work is most familiar through the recordings of the piano version. The change in instrumentation, from full orchestra to piano, not only transforms *Africa* from one genre to another, it alters the historical narrative. As a work for piano, *Africa* is no longer a symphonic work with any ties to the *Afro-American Symphony* or *Song of a New Race*.

The *Afro-American Symphony* was similarly dismembered. The Scherzo was most commonly performed separately and, according to records maintained by Arvey, received over 52 performances by 1951.⁴³ One significant performance took place in Berlin. In 1933 the Berlin Philharmonic, under the direction of Dr. Howard Hanson, caused the Berliners to break tradition when they demanded an encore of the Scherzo.⁴⁴ That this performance should have caused such a response in Hitler's Germany is especially noteworthy. Because of its irrepressible popularity, the Scherzo developed a life of its own. In 1937, Still's publisher, J. Fischer, published two arrangements—one for chamber orchestra and another for piano solo. At least four more unpublished versions exist as well: a two-piano version by Verna Arvey and, according to information made available to Catherine Parson Smith, at least three reduced orchestral versions of the movement by Still.⁴⁵ The Scherzo was not the only movement from the symphony to appear in isolation. Leopold Stokowski chose the final movement, *Lento, con risoluzione*, rather than the Scherzo, when he and the Philadelphia Orchestra took to the road in their 1936 cross-country concert tour. The only time that any portion of the trilogy appeared on the same program during Still's lifetime occurred at the historic 1936 Hollywood Bowl concert when Still conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic in a performance of *Land of Romance* from *Africa* and the Scherzo from the *Afro-American Symphony*.

The Symphony in G Minor was the only work in the trilogy that was never subjected to having its movements performed singularly. Perhaps, this could be attributed to the overall length of the work, but more likely it was because Still joined the two middle movements together in such a fashion that they could not be separated from each other. Even though these movements are the most successful of the symphony, their combined length precluded them from being performed separately.

The fact that these works have never been performed as a group is not enough to determine whether or not these pieces form a larger concep-

tual unit. Musically, the trilogy does not exhibit the kind of long range planning one would expect in a group of works that are supposedly linked. There are no thematic recurrences, motifs, or repeated rhythmic gestures that combine one work with the others. Even the relationship between the main theme of the last movement of the *Afro-American Symphony* and the main theme of the first movement of the second is only “implied” rather than literal (Examples 6a and 6b). Nor is there any attempt to convey a chronological progression via changes in musical styles as in the “Overture” to *Messiah, a Soulful Celebration* (1992) produced by Quincy Jones or in *African Portraits*, a cantata by Hannibal Lokumbe.

Finally, the program narrative, which should be the trilogy’s strongest connecting tissue, was ruptured when Still retracted the original program for the *Afro-American Symphony*. In a letter to Irving Schwerké, Still expressed his misgivings about limiting the interpretation of the symphony to the “sons of the soil”:

I have regretted [attaching a program] because in this particular instance a program is decidedly inadequate. It is true that an interpretation of that sort may be read into the music. Never the less, one who hears the music is quite sure to discover that it has other meanings which are broader in their scope. He may find that the piece portrays four distinct types of Afro-Americans whose sole relationship is the physical one of dark skins. On the other hand, he may find that the music offers the sorrow and joys, the struggles and achievements of an individual Afro-American. Also, it is quite probable that the music will speak to him of moods peculiar to colored Americans. Unquestionably, various other interpretations may be read into the music.⁴⁶

Although Still carefully selected excerpts from four Dunbar poems early in the compositional process, the program notes were added after the work was completed. I believe the couplets, rather than the program notes, reveal Still’s initial intention: that each movement of the *Afro-American Symphony* represent “four distinct” emotional states “peculiar” to “colored Americans.” The symphony, then, is like a collection of vignettes or portraits of African American life and does not represent an advancement of an historical narrative.⁴⁷

Still’s permanent relocation to California in 1934 along with changes in his musical aesthetics must have made fitting his G Minor Symphony, which was not overtly racial, with the other two “racial” works more difficult. Still’s attempt to connect this symphony with the rest seems strained:

This Symphony in G Minor is related to my *Afro-American Symphony* being, in fact, a sort of extension or evolution of the latter. This relationship is implied musically through the infinity of the principal theme of the first movement of the *Symphony in G Minor* to the principle theme of fourth, or last movement of the *Afro-American*.

violin I



Example 6a, *Afro-American Symphony*, mvmt. 4 (*Lento; con risoluzione*), mm. 1–6

oboe



Example 6b, *Song of a New Race*, mvmt. 1 (*Slowly*), mm. 8–10

It may be said that the purpose of the *Symphony in G Minor* is to point musically to changes wrought in a people through the progressive and transmuting spirit of America. I prefer to think of it as an abstract piece of music ⁴⁸

The symphony is “sort of [an] extension”? Its relationship with the *Afro-American Symphony* is “implied”? Still is hedging. Admittedly, Still “preferred to think of [his symphony] as an abstract piece,” but he was in no position to disregard Stokowski’s request for program notes. Even though Still acquiesced and devised a program for the second symphony that would bring closure to a historical narrative begun with *Africa*, he was unable to write subtitles for each individual movement.

Because Still thought of this symphony as an abstract work, his program notes were equally abstract. Unlike the programs for the other works, this one was not about the past. Rather, this program represented Still’s idealized vision of a race neutral society that would exist in the future. Program notes for the work claim the “*Symphony in G Minor* represents the American colored man of today, in so many instances a totally new individual produced through the fusion of White, Indian and Negro bloods.”⁴⁹ Similar language appears in the first paragraph of Arvey’s 1939 biography of her husband:

The America of tomorrow will be even more of a mixture of races, of creeds and of ideals than the America of today. Moreover, because they will have progressed so far in each other’s company, they will have lost some of their identities. Just such a person is William Grant Still: a product of so many different phases of American life that each separate phase is now unrecognizable. It follows that his music is a more accurate expression of that life than any yet conceived.

Clearly, Still is the avatar of this new race and the “song” of the G minor Symphony is none other than his own full-throated aria to America. Still’s dream of a race-neutral society was never achieved during his lifetime. Surely, the Stills came to realize that their vision of the world was not shared by most. This is conjecture on my part, but I believe Still’s uncertainty about the future of race relations is expressed by disrupting the inevitability of the V-I cadence at the end of the symphony. By inserting an F-minor chord immediately before the tonic G-minor chord, Still destabilizes the finality of the tonic. Instead of a definitive statement about race relations, the tonic is transformed into a lingering question asked by three solo violins.

At bottom, the relationship between the individual works in the trilogy is specious. Like the program notes Still wrote for each work, grouping *Africa*, the *Afro-American Symphony*, and *Song of a New Race* into a trilogy was done *after* the works were completed. While Still may have initially considered writing a trilogy, it appears that he lost interest in the enterprise. These are three different works that reflect three different aesthetic positions—modern, racial, and universal—in Still’s career. As for the programs, they are autobiographical. They closely mirror Still’s emerging eschatology concerning race relations and the power of music to effect changes in that relationship.

Notes

1. Catherine Parsons Smith, *William Grant Still: A Study in Contradictions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 233.
2. Sigmund Spaeth, *A History of Popular Music*, (New York: Random House, 1948), 369.
3. Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music* [1936] (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 15-16.
4. Ibid.
5. Alma Gowdy, “Afro-American Music Stirs Bowl Crowd,” *Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express*, 24 July 1936.
6. Olin Downes, “Ballet Presented at Rochester Fete,” *New York Times*, 23 May 1931.
7. Verna Arvey, *William Grant Still, Studies of Contemporary American Composers*, with a foreword by John Tasker Howard (New York: J. Fischer & Bro., 1939), 22.
8. Ibid., 19.
9. Ibid., 21.
10. Samuel Shulsky, “Moderns Strike New Note in Kilbourn Concert,” *Rochester Times-Union*, 25 October 1930.
11. Judith Anne Still, Michael J. Dabrishus, and Carolyn L. Quin, eds., *William Grant Still: A Bio-Bibliography*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), 45.
12. Henry Cowell, “The Music of Edgar Varese” *Modern Music* 5 (January/February 1928), 18.
13. Arvey, *William Grant Still*, 20.
14. G.A.H., “The Palace,” *Manchester Guardian*, 25 March 1943.
15. David Kessler, “New Symphonic Work Acclaimed at First Playing in American Composers’ Concert,” *Rochester Evening Journal and Post Express*, 30 October 1931.
16. Robert Simon, “Musical Events: Three Native Composers, Many Orchestras, and a Few Virtuosi,” *New Yorker* 11 (November 30, 1935): 55.

17. Beverly Wolter, "Composer Conducts N.O. Symphony In Performance of Own Work Here; Urges U.S. to Cultivate Heritage," *Baton Rouge State Times*, 5 March 1955.
18. Albert Murray, *Stomping the Blues*, 2d ed., with a foreword by Rob Gibson (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000), 138.
19. Ibid.
20. Alan Lomax, *The Land Where The Blues Began* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 364.
21. Ibid.
22. H. Wiley Hitchcock and Stanley Sadie, eds., *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* (London: Macmillan, 1986), s.v. "Black bottom," by Pauline Norton.
23. Marshall Stearns and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 110 – 11.
24. Norton, "Black bottom."
25. Brian Rust, *Jazz Records 1897-1942*, 4th revised and enlarged edition (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House Publishers, 1978), 928.
26. Norton, "Black bottom."
27. Arvey, *William Grant Still*, 24.
28. Robert Sherman, "Carnegie Concert Salutes Black History Week," *New York Times*, 16 February 1976.
29. William Grant Still to Irving Schwerke, 5 October 1931, Schwerke Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Photocopy in Still-Arvey Papers.
30. Douglas Gilbert, *Lost Chords* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1942), 13-14.
31. *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, s.v. "Minstrelsy," by Clayton W. Henderson.
32. *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, s.v. "Juba," by W. Kl. McNeil.
33. Marian Hannah Winter, "Juba and American Minstrelsy," in *Chronicles of The American Dance*, ed. Paul Magriel (New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), 40.
34. Those authors include: Mary Bales, "Some Negro Folk Songs of Texas," in *Follow de Drinkin' Gou'd*, ed. Frank Dobie (Austin, TX: Texas Folk-Lore Society, 1927), 105-6; Lynne Fauley Emery, *Black Dance From 1619 to Today*, 2nd ed., (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Book Company, 1988), 227; Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925), 218; and Marshall Stearns and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: the Story of American Vernacular Dance*, 110-11.
35. For an enlightening discussion of this issue and the Scherzo, see Catherine Parsons Smith, "The Afro-American Symphony and Its Scherzo," in *William Grant Still: A Study in Contradictions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 114-151.
36. Stewart Sabin, "American Works Rouse Interest at Civic Orchestra Concert," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, 24 February 1939.
37. *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, s.v. "Popular Music," by Charles Hamm.
38. W.C. Handy, *Father of the Blues*, ed. Arna Bontemps, with a foreword by Abbe Niles (New York: Collier Books, 1941), 226.
39. Richard M. Stephenson and Joseph Iaccarino, *The Complete Book of Ballroom Dancing* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 91.
40. Spaeth, *A History of Popular Music*, 369.
41. Arvey, *William Grant Still*, 21.
42. Originally, *Darker America* (1924) was the first work in the proposed trilogy. He later replaced it with *Africa* because, according to Still, "*Darker America* had quite a few faults, viz. lack of consistency in form; too much material for such a short composition; faulty harmonization in places." (Smith 226).
43. Catherine Parsons Smith, *Contradictions*, 146.
44. Herbert Peyser, "American Music Gains Respect Under Hanson's Baton in Berlin," *Musical Courier* 106 (February 4, 1933): 5.
45. Catherine Parsons Smith, *Contradictions*, 146.
46. Still to Schwerké, 5 October 1931. Schwerké Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. In Gayle Murchison, "Nationalism in William Grant Still

and Aaron Copland Between the Wars: Style and Ideology” Ph.D.diss., (Yale, 1998), 300.

47. For another informative discussion on the historicism of Still’s trilogy read Gayle Murchinson, “Dean of Afro-American Composers” or “Harlem Renaissance Man” in Catherine Parsons Smith, ed., *William Grant Still: A Study in Contradictions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 39–65.

48. Arvey, *William Grant Still*, 30.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., 7.