

# Black History Classical Awareness

## Recordings of Black and African heritage composers

Less well known and often “invisible”, black and African heritage classical composers span three centuries and come from the continents of Europe, Africa, and the Americas . In an effort to increase awareness, initiatives are being undertaken to unveil and to acknowledge black composers and their creative output within the rich tapestry of classical music.

It may also be of interest to learn that in 1934 the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowski, premiered William Levi Dawson’s *Negro Folk Symphony*. For the classical music world, this was significant and historic -but it was not a first. Dawson was only one among many talented African heritage composers whose musical voices began to emerge in the early 1900s.

Currently, more than 120 black composers have been recorded on compact discs. It is up to individual listeners to sample this output and discover the many historic, varied and worthwhile musical voices now available.

Explore some of the following selected recordings.

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### CONCERTOS

**Samuel Coleridge-Taylor / Antonin Dvorak (AVIE)** Violin Concerto in G minor by Coleridge-Taylor.

**American Trombone Concertos (BIS)** Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra by George Walker.

**Violin Concertos by Black Composers of the 18th & 19th Centuries (Cedille)** Concertos by Chevalier de Meudon-Monpas, Jose White and others.

### ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

**Milhaud, Maurice, Forsyth, Sowande (CBC Records)** African Suite for strings and harp by Fela Sowande.

**African Heritage Symphonic Series - Volume II (Cedille)** Lyric for Strings by George Walker. Works by Ulysses Kay, Roque Cordero, Adolphus Hailstork and Hale Smith.

**Florence Price, The Women’s Philharmonic (Koch)** Symphony No. 3, The Oak, and the Mississippi River Suite are by Price.



Joseph Boulogne Chevalier de Saint-Georges ca 1745-1799

Composer of many violin concertos, sonatas and string quartets.

### CHAMBER MUSIC

**Cafe Music - Schoenfield, Copland, et al / The Samaris Trio (Newport Classic)** Roots II, a trio for:violin, cello and piano, by David Baker.

**Quartet Antares: Saint-Georges String Quartets (Integral Records)** Quartets by Joseph Boulogne Chevalier de Saint-Georges.

**The Classical Underground-Imani Winds (Koch)** Homage to Duke, a wind quintet, by Jeff Scott. Also Concerto for Wind Quintet by Valerie Coleman.

### SOLO INSTRUMENT

**Piano Music by African-American Composers (CRI)** In the Bottoms by R. Nathaniel Dett. Works by William Grant Still, John W. Work, Hale Smith and others. Performed by Philadelphia native Natalie Hinderas

**Spiritual Fantasy (Albany)** Organ works by Fela Sowande, William Grant Still and others.

### VOCAL/CHORAL & ORCHESTRA

**Dance Like the Wind (Clarion)** From VocalEssence Witness Collection. Title work by William Banfield. Also works by Billy Childs, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson and others.

### FURTHER READING

Southern, Eileen. (1997) *The Music of Black Americans: A History*. W.W. Norton

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