"Very Beautiful and Very American": A Multicultural Analysis of Florence B. Price's Quintet in A Minor for Piano and Strings

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“Very Beautiful and Very American”: A Multicultural Analysis
of Florence B. Price’s Quintet in A Minor
for Piano and Strings

Taryn Jane Carvajal Harding

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

“Very Beautiful and Very American”: A Multicultural Analysis of Florence B. Price’s Quintet in A Minor for Piano and Strings

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Master of Arts

This paper examines the Quintet in A Minor for Piano and Strings by Florence B. Price (1887-1953). One of Price's latest compositions (with final revisions dated January 21, 1952), the Quintet is a masterful example of what is possible when using a multicultural lens to approach the making of American music. This paper exposes the insufficiency of examining (and assessing) multicultural composers and their works only with traditional Western European analytical views, when an expanded approach is needed to explain many of the non-European musical influences and phenomena. While more complex and challenging, this expanded analytical approach sheds added light and understanding on all compositional techniques used within this work.

This analysis of the Quintet in A Minor shows that Price often self-quotes from some of her own earlier works; specifically works from her organ, art song, and symphonic oeuvres. The findings also show that Price’s understanding of both Western Classical traditions and African-American musical traditions enabled her to intertwine multiple cultures, creating novel forms that are authentic to the American experience she lived. Price created what she referred to as a “very beautiful and very American” sound.

Keywords: Florence Beatrice Price, Florence Beatrice Smith, Florence Price, Multicultural, Quintet, Piano Quintet, A Minor, Juba, Chicago Renaissance, New England Conservatory of Music, Woman Composer, Female Composer of Color, Black Composer, African American Composer, American Composer, Margaret Bonds, Marian Anderson, Little Rock, Slow Me Down Lord, First Sonata for Organ, Guilmant, Organist, Organ Composer, Women Organ Composer, Symphony No. 1 E Minor, Symphony No. 3 C Minor
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I would like to express gratitude for my Mother, for her strengths and her teachings while she was here on this earth. I would next like to express my gratitude to Dr. Luke Howard, who helped me to discover the music of Florence B. Price, for his kindness and for creating a safe space in which to conduct this research. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Calvert Johnson for taking the time to speak to a stranger at a convention when he didn’t have to, and to all others who have helped me in my learning. I would finally like to express my greatest gratitude and love to my husband, my children, my siblings, and my extended family for always supporting me in my endeavors.
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INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The idea of multiculturalism within music is one that is still being readily explored; no multicultural person has the exact same life experiences as another. Within many of Florence Price’s compositions there are elements of multiculturalism. Often when Price wrote about herself or some of her compositions, she would reference her multiculturalism. In a letter written as an attempt to have a major orchestra play her symphonies¹, she explained her musical perspective. She wrote, “Having been born in the South and having spent most of my childhood there I believe I can truthfully say that I understand the real Negro music. In some of my work I make use of the idiom undiluted. Again, at other times it merely flavors my themes. And at still other times thoughts come in the garb of the other side of my mixed racial background. I have tried to for practical purposes to cultivate and preserve a facility of expression in both idioms, altho [sic] I have an unwavering and compelling faith that a national music very beautiful and very American can come from the melting pot just as the nation itself has done.” Unlike some of the other high-profile Black American composers of the day–William Grant Still and William Dawson, for example–she became a master at understanding both of these cultures because her privileges allowed her to exist more comfortably in both cultures. Like the visual artist Romare Bearden, Price was light-skinned enough that she could have “passed”, and she did for a short while. However, it must not have sat well with her as early in her life she made the choice to embrace her heritage and represent all parts of her cultures. With this choice, she was able to represent different cohorts and communities the way that nobody else at the time could do.

Price’s talent was undeniable. She began her collegiate education at the age of fifteen, receiving training in a double-degree program as a solo organist and piano instructor at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. She finished a four-year program in three years, graduating at the age of eighteen. She was the first African American female to have a symphony played by a major orchestra. She consistently won prizes for her compositions throughout her life and was one of the most in-demand composers of her time. She died with hundreds of compositions to her name. She was phenomenally talented. And yet Price was almost entirely lost to the music world for over half a decade–a fate as shocking as it was undeserved.

Being a child of relative privilege² and one of the most talented musicians and composers of her time still wasn’t enough to negate the fact that Price was a woman and a person of color. Professional obstacles faced by historically-marginalized communities are still, today, an unfortunate reality for many, and while long-held attitudes are beginning to shift, Price’s works are still not represented in the modern classical canon with the valuation they deserve. The current western classical canon has long held the expectation that a composer’s voice is

¹ Letter to Serge Koussevitsky, conductor of the Boston Symphony, in an attempt to have him look at her Symphony Nos. 1 and 3. Further referenced in the historical section of this paper.
² At no point do I mean to imply that Florence Price or any of her family members did not experience the racial prejudices that other members of Black communities did during this time, even with her privileged upbringing.
European and male. Price is an ideal case study on what happens when a compositional voice doesn’t fit neatly into those expectations, and on what the long-term ramifications are for non-traditional compositional voices in the future. While cultural appropriation is well represented in the prevailing canon, Price’s authentically multicultural works have been devalued for too long.

In order to get a clearer idea of who Florence Price was, and where her music came from, it is important to understand her upbringing, and a few pertinent events that occurred during her life, many of which will have direct influence on her Quintet in A Minor for Piano and Strings.

Price was born Florence Beatrice Smith on April 9, 1887, in Little Rock, Arkansas. Both of her parents came from families of mixed-race heritage and were both quite light-skinned. They both came to be part of the Black upper-middle class, which afforded the family privileges and opportunities unusual to most members of Black communities at the time. 

Price’s mother, Florence Irene Gulliver, “was an amateur singer, accomplished pianist, and astute businesswoman.” Florence Irene’s parents were both from North Carolina and resided there through the birth of their two older daughters. The Gulliver home was atypical for Black families in North Carolina During at the time; they were all literate and free. In the 1840s the family left for Indianapolis to escape living in a slave state and this was where Florence Irene was born in 1854.

Florence Irene’s father established a barbershop which eventually became a chain, and procured a considerable amount of real-estate properties, becoming a part of Indianapolis’s middle-class Black community. With this enhanced social standing, the Gulliver children were able to be educated and grow up in a relatively comfortable lifestyle that was unfamiliar to most other Blacks. With this supported upbringing, Florence Irene was well educated and became a school teacher at a local elementary school, and eventually (after her marriage) also a real estate investor in Little Rock, Arkansas.

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3 Florence B. Price’s parents were both of African American and Caucasian descent. Exact heritages are unknown but Florence Irene (Price’s mother) was light enough to pass as a White woman.
5 Dr. Rae Linda Brown’s biography of Price, The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price, is a wealth of historical information and by far the most thorough and current collection of information available to researchers right now. For a more in-depth account of historical events related to Price’s parents see chapter 1 of the biography.
Florence Beatrice’s father, James H. Smith (b. 1843), was born to free parents in Delaware, but the family moved to New Jersey to seek respite from the Delaware Code of 1852. Smith left for New York City at age 15 to continue his education, eventually landing in Philadelphia, where he worked as an apprentice in a dental office. After a failed application to dental school (denied due to his race), Smith returned to the office to gain a certificate in dentistry earned through practical study.

Dr. Smith was a groundbreaker in the field of dentistry. With the Civil War upon them, opportunities for African-Americans to be professionally trained were exceedingly rare. There were less than a dozen Black dentists in the country when he began his career. The fact that Dr. Smith was even able to complete his professional training in dentistry speaks volumes to his fortitude and resolve.

When he was ready to begin his own practice, Dr. Smith moved to Chicago and became the first Black dentist in the city. His practice in the center of the city became very successful, but he lost everything in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. This prompted directly his decision to move to southern Arkansas. Dr. Smith was passionate about educating the young members of the African-American communities of the South. He built schools (which were closer to huts) from what he was able to gather with his own hands, but received constant death threats while attempting to educate Black children. After he had saved enough money he decided to move to Little Rock.

Dr. Smith married Florence Irene Gulliver on November 15, 1876 in her hometown of Indianapolis. They settled in Little Rock where Dr. Smith continued to teach for a couple more years. In 1878 he resumed his dental practice, establishing himself as a prominent member of society, serving both Black and White customers.

The Smiths welcomed a son, Charles, a year after they were married, with a daughter, Florence Gertrude, joining the family a little under three years later. Some time later, Florence Gertrude passed away, before the birth of Florence Beatrice on April 9, 1887. Because Florence Beatrice bore the same first name as her mother and deceased older sister, the chosen name her family used to address her was Beatrice or “Bea.”

Little Rock was a middle-sized town in Arkansas, with a population that was approximately two-thirds White and one-third Black. After emancipation, a small Black middle class emerged in Little Rock, along with an even smaller Black upper class. The Smiths belonged to the upper

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7 The Delaware Code restricted residence of free blacks who were already living in Delaware. No additional free blacks were allowed to take up residence and there were strict ramifications on how long free blacks already residing were able to leave the state without consequence of exile.

8 Dr. Smith wrote a novel, Maudelle, in which he wrote more of the conditions of these schoolhouses. Smith, Maudelle, 306.
class. The city’s Black community was entirely self-sufficient. There were professionals of every kind, featuring Black-established institutions such as newspapers, banks, hotels, teachers, churches, lawyers, and a dentist.\(^9\) Little Rock became a place of respite for the Black community, allowing for the blossoming of social and financial opportunities for its residents.

The Smiths were active in Allison Presbyterian church, an upper-class Black church partially founded with Dr. Smith’s assistance. Unlike many other Black churches in the South, Allison Presbyterian fostered a very conservative, quiet, and musically rich experience for its congregation. Regular church attendance at Allison Presbyterian (and, later, at other relatively conservative churches, as well) was a major factor in the growth of “Bea” Smith’s spiritual and musical knowledge, and she would compose many works for sacred use during her lifetime, drawing on the exposure first gained at Allison Presbyterian.

During this time, Mr. Charles Shepperson and his wife Carrie (Still) Shepperson—the parents of William Grant Still (later to be dubbed the “Dean of African-American composers”)—were close friends of the Smith family in Little Rock. They were considered part of the same social circles, and both families would often host prominent performers, civil right leaders, and other professionals in their homes.\(^10\)

Through these connections, and her family’s location in the South, Florence “Bea” Smith lived through marked and rapidly-developing political changes.\(^11\) Jim Crow segregation laws began to form, beginning with the House of Representatives Tillman Separate Coach Bill (1891)\(^12\) and skewed elections. Black voices of authority had been eradicated from the house of the Arkansas legislature, and nearly eradicated in local government.

Dr. Smith became more and more heavily involved in his attempts to advocate for his community, but Florence Irene Smith chose to focus inwards. Mrs. Smith was used to the luxuries afforded to the upper classes. As she was light-skinned enough to pass for White, she was accustomed to the privileges her skin color afforded her. The status she achieved through colorism within Black communities had elevated herself and her family prior to these political changes. But with the “one-drop rule”\(^13\) and forced segregation laws in place, Mrs. Smith’s light skin no longer afforded her the privileges she was accustomed to. She was known in the community to be of mixed race, of which one was Black, and was to be treated as every other

\(^12\) Brown, *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price*, 28-29. Dr. Smith was involved in the attempted halting of the legislation which ultimately passed.
\(^13\) The one-drop rule was created to codify race. It has been used for and against many races. For example, if you had just one drop of Black blood in your line you would be considered Negro. Indigenous Americans have had this same rule applied against their claims of indigeneity. For example, if a person had one drop of non-indigenous blood then they were not able to claim the heritage.
Black woman. Mrs. Smith wanted nothing more than to maintain her social status, and proved willing to sacrifice friendships and familial relationships in her attempts. She saw her daughter’s emerging musical abilities as a way to reclaim her social status, and encouraged her education.

Florence Beatrice’s first professional desire was to become a doctor. Although a Black female doctor was hardly imaginable at this time, that did not deter “Bea.” After all, her father was the first Black dentist in Little Rock and her mother was a very successful real estate entrepreneur. Eventually, “Bea” gave up that dream and decided to focus on music. From a young age she showed an aptitude for piano and composition. She graduated from high school at fourteen years old as the valedictorian of her class.

At the age of fifteen, Florence “Bea” Smith was ready to continue her education at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. Her mother was concerned about how Florence would be perceived when she went to New England for schooling, and rented an apartment for her, to include a maid. Mrs. Smith encouraged her daughter to “pass” or present herself as Mexican, in order to avoid the harsher racism associated with identifying overtly as Black.14 Initially, Florence complied with her mother’s wish. But while this may have given her a slight advantage socially, Florence “Bea” inevitably declared herself a mixed-race African-American. The significance of this choice impacted Price’s compositional choices for the remainder of her life, and likely limited her range of opportunities as well.

Boston was well-known for its support of American composers, many of whom went to Germany for training and returned to teach the techniques learned there at the most prominent American schools, including Harvard, Yale, and the New England Conservatory. It was a city that was able to offer musicians as close to a European training in music as was possible in America at the time. This training, and the opportunities it afforded, were not kept from women musicians, either. Composers such as Margaret Ruthven Lang (1876-1972), the first woman to have an orchestral work performed by a major American orchestra; Helen Hopekirk (1856-1945), whose Piano Concerto in D Major was played with the Boston symphony; and Amy Cheney Beach (1867-1944), the first American composer who was female to achieve international fame; were making prominent advancements in music at around the same time, through their connections with Boston.

Just as important were the achievements of African-American women in Boston. These women included performers, teachers, theorists, and published composers such as Carrie Melvin Lucas, composer of a well known ballad; Louisa Melvin Delos Mars, composer of five full length operettas; and Miriam Benjamin, whose marches “The Boston Elite Two Step,” (performed by the United States Marine Band under John Philip Sousa) and “The American Bugle Call,” (used

14 Brown, The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price, 41. Price's daughter offered the explanation of why Price’s race was listed as such.
as the campaign song for Theodore Roosevelt and Charles Fairbanks in the 1904 election) were historically significant.\textsuperscript{15}

With the community of Boston supporting so many opportunities for diverse populations, it was no surprise that Price expected to be successful in her endeavors there. She enrolled in a double-degree program as a soloist on the organ and a pedagog on the piano.\textsuperscript{16} Much of her training would become evident in her compositional output, even transferring techniques between organ and piano. Her organ training under Henry M. Dunham was especially rigorous. In addition to the expectation of solo works learned and performed, Dunham’s students were expected to accompany the orchestra by playing missing wind parts, understand how to tune the organs, and perform instrument maintenance. Florence “Bea” Smith was an extraordinary performer, and was consistently chosen to perform solos in the elite school recitals. On November 15, 1904, she performed Felix-Alexandre Guilmant’s popular Sonata in D Minor for organ, with the composer in attendance. The composer came “forward at the conclusion of the number and publicly congratulated her upon the execution and interpretation of the difficult number.”\textsuperscript{17}

It was, and still is, common for organ students to play for a congregation while doing their studies, and Florence Smith was no exception, playing for the Unitarian Church in Natick, Massachusetts. She most likely had also played for her church at home in Little Rock, and served in church organ playing positions during her entire life.

As a student, Florence Smith became increasingly interested in exploring composition. George Whiefield Chadwick, a member of the “Second New England School”\textsuperscript{18} of composers and head of The New England Conservatory of Music, would often find students who showed promise and offer them scholarships to study composition with him while they were completing their degrees. Chadwick saw great promise in Smith and invited her to begin composition studies with him, as well. Even though Chadwick was trained in the ways of Germanic studies, he was a pioneer in his desires and efforts to move away from the German styles and explore a distinctly “American” music. Chadwick regarded women as serious musicians, and treated them as such. He, along with all Smith’s instructors at the Conservatory, pushed her to grow in her craft, lending her no excuses for mediocrity, and expecting excellence. And excellence she delivered. Smith graduated with a Soloist’s Diploma in organ performance and a Teacher’s Diploma in piano in 1903. This dual degree was designed to be completed in four years, but of all the students to graduate from


\textsuperscript{16} Brown, \textit{The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price}, 48. A list of courses Price took while at school is available.

\textsuperscript{17} Johnson, C. Score. Special collections, University of Arkansas Library, Box 1, file 11, index cards 49-50.

the Conservatory that year, Florence Smith was the only one who graduated with this dual degree, and she completed it in three years.

Florence Smith’s upbringing and educational opportunities were rare for African-Americans during this time. She experienced a level of privilege and opportunity greater than many White people of the time. It’s important to note how much she was able to accomplish up to this point with these advantages, as these privileges would soon begin to be eroded after she left New England to return to the South.

Smith returned to Arkansas to an environment quite different to the one she left. Black opportunities had been severely stripped away, and Jim Crow segregation laws were in full effect. The need for Black colleges became apparent and Price decided to begin her teaching career at the Cotton Plant-Arkadelphia Academy in Cotton Plant, Arkansas. After a year she moved to Shorter College in Argenta and held that post from 1907 to 1910. She lived with her aging parents during this time. On April 17, 1910, her father, Dr. Smith, died. He was in arrears for quite a few debts at the time of his death so Mrs. Smith settled his debts and decided she was going to return to Indianapolis to begin life again “passing” as a fully White woman, destroying any trace of her life in Little Rock.19

After her father’s death and her mother’s choice to move, Florence Smith decided to accept a prestigious teaching position as Head of the Music Department at another Black college, Clark University in Atlanta.20 It was during this time that she met and married her husband, attorney Thomas Jewell Price. (She would be known, professionally and socially, as Florence Price from this time on.)

Originally from Connecticut, Thomas Price moved to Little Rock in 1908 to join the law firm of Scipio Africanus Jones, the city’s most prominent Black attorney. As a partner in the firm, and with his wife’s connections to the city, it made perfect sense for the Prices to live in Little Rock.

Price and her husband were successful and active within their community. They began their family shortly after being married and welcomed their first child Thomas Jr. (Tommy), who passed away in infancy. Price welcomed daughters Florence Louis on July 6, 1917, and Edith Cassandra on March 29, 1921. She was by all accounts, an attentive and doting mother. She spent the first years of their lives teaching both piano and violin from her home, writing many of her own studies for her students to learn and perform.21

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19 Brown, *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price*, 62-63. Price’s daughter explained that many pictures and valuable data were destroyed because Mrs. Smith didn’t want to be connected with her life in Little Rock after her husband died. She made a purposeful decision to “pass”.
20 Brown, *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price*, 64. Footnote 1
During this time Florence Price submitted several of her small-scale piano pieces into competitions and was awarded a few prizes, prompting her to pursue composition more heavily. During the summers of 1926 and 1927, she spent the summers in Chicago studying composition, harmony, and orchestration at the Chicago Musical College (one of the most prestigious American music conservatories of the day) with Carl Busch, Wesley la Violette, and Arthur Olaf Anderson. But back in Little Rock, the Price family struggled financially. When one of their daughters was threatened with bodily harm as reparation for a crime she was not involved in, the family decided it was time to move to Chicago.

In the 1920s, Chicago was a place of hope and community for African-Americans. The Great Black Migration had created a booming metropolis that was culturally and artistically rich, and Chicago had established itself as a center of jazz and blues. Some of the best jazz artists of the time both lived and played at clubs, including Jelly Roll Morton, Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, Cab Calloway, and Louis Armstrong. Classical music also thrived during this time, especially within African-American communities. Events such as the All-Colored Composers Concert at Orchestral Hall were held annually, featuring the works of important Black composers including Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and Harry T. Burleigh. Choral concerts were well attended, and Sunday afternoon concerts were frequently performed and broadcast from churches. Operas and oratorios such as Coleridge-Taylor’s Hiawatha’s Wedding Feast were often performed and well received. While Price was not, herself, a jazz or blues musician, she was certainly aware of and influenced by the diversity of musical styles and culture surrounding her in Chicago.

Not long after her family arrived in Chicago, Price became affiliated with Grace Presbyterian Church. Colorism was very much a part of Black church practices there, and Grace Presbyterian attracted only the light-skinned, middle-class, well-educated professionals of the Black community. The music heard during worship services at Grace Presbyterian was relatively high-brow: Bach, Handel, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Wagner, and Price’s own compositions were featured in the services.

Under the auspices of the National Convention of Musicians, the National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM) was founded in Chicago, with the express aim of promoting Black “classical” music. The first branch formed was the Chicago Music Association with the second branch formed in 1922. These two branches of the NANM were of the utmost importance to both the Black and White musical communities of Chicago. They organized lecture-performances, sponsored recitals for international musicians, and promoted work of African-American musicians.

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24 The Great Black Migration, also known as The Great Northward Migration, developed from people trying to escape poor economic conditions and Jim Crow laws. They were refugees in their own country.
composers. Price became one of the most active members of the second branch, the R. Nathaniel Dett Club, and held various offices including chair of the composition committee.\textsuperscript{26}

This was a very productive time compositionally for Price. As a composer, her unique and diverse output represented almost every professional option she was afforded. While continuing to teach at her private home studio, she published compositions for educational purposes, classical pieces for various ensembles, and popular music (sometimes under the pen name “VeeJay”).\textsuperscript{27} Although her church’s musical offerings tended towards the German Classical canon, she was also familiar with the tradition of spirituals, and composed many during this time that were well received and performed often.

During the 1930s, Price was awarded a scholarship to study orchestration at the Chicago-based American Conservatory of Music, and also undertook graduate courses at the Chicago Teachers College and the University of Chicago.\textsuperscript{28} But even these recognitions and accomplishments couldn’t overcome the financial troubles the Price family experienced.

In an effort to bring in more money, Price became one of the few working theater organists in Chicago. Her husband, Thomas Price, once a successful attorney, had since become unemployed, and was increasingly violent towards Florence. She filed for divorce, which was granted on January 19, 1931. Florence Price was awarded sole custody of her daughters and $25 weekly for alimony and child support. One month after her divorce, Price married Pusey Dell Arnett—a marriage of convenience, by all accounts. She kept “Florence B. Price” as her professional name.

Price began working on her Symphony No.1 in E Minor in January of 1931, at precisely the same time she filed for divorce from her first husband, and it occupied much of the next two years for her. When she saw the advertisement for the prestigious Rodman Wanamaker Competition in 1932, Price decided that she was ready to compete for the $1000 prize, and entered her Symphony No.1 in E Minor and her tone poem "Ethiopia’s Shadow in America" in the symphonic category, and the Sonata in E Minor and Fantasie No.4 in the piano composition category. Price was the unanimously declared winner in the symphonic category for Symphony No.1, with honorable mention for "Ethiopia’s Shadow in America. She also received first prize in the piano compositions for the Sonata in E Minor, with honorable mention for the Fantasie No.4. Her winnings earned her a grand total sum of $750 out of the $1000 possible, with the remainder of the prize money awarded to Price’s former student and longtime friend Margaret Bonds.\textsuperscript{29} \textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{26} Brown, \textit{The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price}, 88-89.
\textsuperscript{27} Brown, \textit{The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price}, 90
\textsuperscript{28} Brown, \textit{The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price}, 98
\textsuperscript{29} Brown, \textit{The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price}, 103.
\textsuperscript{30} Margaret Bonds was a phenomenal pianist and composer in her own right. Her mother, Estella Bonds, was a force in the growth of music in the Chicago area. Bonds and Price would often perform together throughout Price’s life.
After her Wanamaker win, Price experienced great professional growth, and was welcomed in both black and white social circles—an unusually rare distinction. Her piano music and organ compositions were often in great demand among performers. Proof of her ability to move in both cultural spaces was evident in her membership of the Chicago Woman’s Club, of which she was its first Black member. And she was in demand for lectures. Renowned Black dancer and choreographer Katherine Dunham created a ballet set to Price’s Fantasie Negre. And although, because of racist practices, she could only work behind the scenes, Price was also active in radio broadcasting.  

With this newfound public success, there was a clear distinction between how Price’s career was presented in White and Black newspapers. When Black newspaper editors, including Robert Abbot and Najum Daniel Brascher, made mention of Price in their reviews, they almost always failed to mention her by name, focusing instead on her gender and race. This was unfortunate but understandable, as their agenda was to elevate the race as a whole, not to elevate women or individuals. In White newspapers, Price was usually identified by name, most likely because the newspapers themselves, and those who wrote for them, did not have to carry the same agenda. Through being named in these reviews, Price was given that individual recognition and validation that was missing in reviews by Black journalists.

This emergence of a vibrant Black culture of concert music should not have been a surprise to observers of the day. Thirty years earlier, while even White American composers were still considered a novelty, Antonin Dvořák had suggested and affirmed the usage of Black melodies in creating a distinct, “American” music. Harry Burleigh, an African-American composer, was a major influence on Dvořák’s own composition, the New World Symphony. British mixed-race composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was another force in the increased focus on Black music in America. (Although Coleridge-Taylor was born of a White British mother and Sierra-Leonean father, his paternal lineage traced back directly to African-Americans, and he was drawn powerfully to Black American culture and experience.) Because of his commercial and critical successes in England, Coleridge-Taylor was deemed as respectable enough to come to America to advocate for black American musicians among White administrators and musicians. Both Burleigh and Coleridge-Taylor advocated for the usage of spirituals in modern composition.

32 This was a time for many exciting firsts for members of the black musical communities. Roland Hayes was the first black concert singer appearing with a major American orchestra on November 16, 1923. # Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra premiered William Grant Still’s, Afro-American Symphony. In June of 1933, Price’s Symphony in E Minor was played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra with conductor Frederick Stock. In 1934, William L. Dawson’s Negro Folk Symphony was premiered by the Philadelphia Orchestra.
Still, this was a difficult concept for both Black and White musicians to align with. For so long, Whites had looked down on spirituals as a lower form of music-making, and Blacks had wanted to forget spirituals, as they reminded many of the history of the bondage of their families. But the idea of creating new music that drew from multiple cultures was new, and began to take root among many American composers. White American composers of this period began to use both African and Indigenous American motifs in their music, but the compositions almost always resulted in insensitive cultural appropriation as they hadn’t understood the cultural nuances behind the source material. Here is where Price's unique abilities and experiences proved valuable. Her biography and experiences allowed her to fully understand both Black and White cultural influences and expectations.

Later in the 1930s, Price joined even more clubs and organizations. She was the first to racially integrate some of these clubs, such as the Illinois Federation of Music Clubs and the Musicians Club of Women. This was achievable primarily because Price was educated, soft spoken, and accomplished, neither pushy nor aggressive in her demeanor, and somewhat self-effacing.\(^{36}\)

This natural modesty was a challenge that Price recognized and admitted. In an attempt to promote the performances of her works, she sent scores of the Symphony No. 1 and the Piano Concerto, with cover letters, to the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Serge Koussevitzky\(^ {37} \). Her first and second attempts received no answer. In a third correspondence, Price began her letter in about as blunt of a tone as she could muster. She wrote:\(^ {38} \)

My dear Dr. Koussevitzky,

To begin with I have two Handicaps-those of sex and race. I am a woman; and I have some Negro blood in my veins.

Knowing the worst, then, would you be good enough to hold in check the possible inclination to regard a woman’s composition as long on emotionalism but short on virility and thought content;-until you shall have examined some of my work?

As to the handicap of race, may I relieve you by saying that I neither expect nor ask any concession on that score. I should like to be judged on merit alone-the great trouble having been to get conductors, who know nothing of my work (I am practically unknown in the East, except perhaps as the composer of two songs, one or the other of which Marian Anderson includes on most of her programs) to even consent to examine a score.

I confess that I am woefully lacking in the hardihood of aggression; that writing this letter to you is the result of having successfully done battle with a hounding timidity. Having been born in the South and having spent most of my


\(^{37}\) Price sent her scores for her first attempt to have them look at by Dr. Koussevitzky on August 8, 1935.

childhood there I believe I can truthfully say that I understand the real Negro music. In some of my work I make use of the idiom undiluted. Again, at other times it merely flavors my themes. And at still other times thoughts come in the garb of the other side of my mixed racial background. I have tried to for practical purposes to cultivate and preserve a facility of expression in both idioms, altho [sic] I have an unwavering and compelling faith that a national music very beautiful and very American can come from the melting pot just as the nation itself has done.

Will you examine one of my scores?

Yours very sincerely,

[signed] (Mrs.)Florence B. Price

Despite her professional successes to date, Price still received no answer from Koussevitzky. After yet another prolonged silence she made one last attempt to ask Koussevitzky to examine her scores. She wrote:

My dear Dr. Koussevitzky:

Unfortunately the work of a woman composer is preconceived by many to be light, frothy, lacking in depth, logic and virility. Add to that the incident of race-I have Colored blood in my veins-and you will understand some of the difficulties that confront one in such a position. My own detestable but seemingly unconquerable shyness has not served me to gain for me widespread hearing. The few times I have been able to overcome this handicap in the past and to manage to get a score examined I have met with most gratifying results, as you will note in the comments of critics quoted in my folder.

Now that duties connected with caring for parents and children have been lifted from my shoulders\(^39\), I do so want to make tangible progress and to get examined and performed some of my accumulated scores.

In keeping with one last promise to myself that I shall no longer hang back, I am now being so bold as to address you. I ask no concessions because of my race or sex, and am willing to abide by a decision based solely on [the] worth of my work.

Will you be kind enough to examine a score of mine? Very truly yours,

(signed) (Mrs.)Florence B. Price

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\(^{39}\) Price was attempting to assure Koussevitzky that her children were grown and her parents were no longer alive, as these may have been things that possibly could have contributed to Koussevitzky’s lack of professional attention. Societal expectations during the time being that a woman would be expected to care for children or family before being allowed to participate in the workplace.
Price had shown and continued to show considerable ability to assess and overcome obstacles in the way of her professional progress, most likely because she had encountered the very situations of which she attempted to reassure Koussevitzky in these letters. Unfortunately, after nine years of receiving Price’s letters, even with the assurances that her music was strong and that she would not be distracted by familial obligations, Koussevitzky never programmed Price’s music.

During the Great Depression, the future of American musicians seemed unsteady. Under the Works Progress Administration (WPA), later known as the Works Project Administration, the government established the Federal Music Project in 1935 as a way to keep musicians actively making music. The WPA provided free concerts for the public while paying the musicians, composers, and conductors a wage. Over 150 composers in New York City had their works premiered through the WPA, including artists such as Marion Bauer, Amy Beach, Marc Blitzstein, Aaron Copland, Carlos Chavez, Ruth Crawford, David Diamond, Howard Hanson, Walter Piston, William Schuman, and Virgil Thomson.40

Price and other Black artists, including William Grant Still and Harry T. Burleigh, benefited from the WPA’s assistance. The Forum String Quartet, consisting of faculty of the University of Illinois, gave Price the opportunity to have her difficult chamber music performed by professional musicians. In a performance on June 15, 1937, they presented Price’s Octet for piano quintet and vocal ensemble, The Wind and the Sea (1934); her Piano Quintet in E Minor (1936); and Fantasie Negre No. 4 in B Minor.41

Price’s close work with master-musicians who were equally-yoked racially would serve her well in future compositional endeavors. She blossomed professionally during this time, and made well placed friends in the process. Even Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady, wrote expressing her pleasure at hearing Florence Price’s works performed. Price had mastered both the Black and White worlds of music, or so it seemed, and this was occasionally a challenge. In a letter written to archivist Mary Hudgins, Price’s daughter Florence Price Robinson spoke of how her mother did not carry resentment, but would often come across some Blacks who resented her success and her ability to navigate both Black and White cultural (and sometimes physical) spaces.

In the spring of 1941 Price and her daughters moved to a Chicago home known as the Abraham Lincoln Center. The Lincoln Center was similar to a commune in its design and was housing for people with common interests in the arts. Price and her daughters were the only Black members of the Center, and that did not seem to bother or affect Price’s ability to work or create her music. In fact, she was so in demand that at one point she had close to one-hundred students in her piano studio. The auditorium on the ground floor of the building was open to the public and there were often performances held there. Not only musicians shared ideas but writers and dancers as well,

41 It may be that the score for the Piano Quintet in E Minor was part of the recently discovered manuscripts in Price’s summer home but it is unsure as of yet.
many of whom are credited with sparking the Chicago Renaissance. Langston Hughes spent
some time in Chicago during the 1930s and early 1940 but maintained that he didn’t care for it
much, deciding it was too cold and dangerous. But during his time there, Hughes befriended
Price’s close friend Margaret Bonds and most certainly may have crossed paths with Price, as
well. While she was not a writer of words, Price had to have been influenced by the powerful
cultural figures that moved in and through her circle. 42

It was during this time that Price wrote the Symphony No. 3. In a letter she wrote to Michigan
WPA orchestra’s administrator Frederick Schwass, Price noted that the symphony intended to
project the character and expression of Negro music but that it was not adapted from existing
folk songs. She said she wanted to portray a modern view of Negro life and thought.43

With this Symphony, Price masterfully combined her extensive training in performance, her
understanding of European compositional practices, and first-hand grounding in African
American musical traditions to create a whole new experience that looked forward rather than
backwards into the Black experience. An explanation of this new style, in her own words, is
found in the last letter she wrote to Sergei Koussevitzky on September 18, 1941. She declared, “I
have a symphony in which I tried to portray a cross section of Negro life and psychology as it is
today, influenced by urban life north of the Mason and Dixon line. It is not ‘program music’. I
merely had in mind the life and music of the Negro of today and for that reason treated my
themes in a manner difference from what I would have done if I had centered my attention upon
the religious themes of antebellum days, or yet the ragtime and jazz that followed; rather a fusion
of these, colored by present cultural influences.”44

Through the 1940s and 1950s Price continued to compose large scale works such as the
Symphony in D Minor, which has since been lost.45 She also composed for smaller genres such
as chamber works, art songs, and arrangements of spirituals. This focus shift to smaller mediums
made sense given the economic impact the Great Depression and World War 2 had on daily life
in America. Large scale performances were substantially more difficult to organize and execute
under such circumstances.

Still, Price’s recognition and reputation continued to grow during this time. Her work and her
name were becoming known abroad. English conductor Sir John Barbirolli, of the Halle
Orchestra in Manchester, sent Price a telegram in 1951 asking her if she would write a concert

43 Florence B. Price to Frederick L. Schwass (Allen Park, Michigan), October 22, 1940. TS copy, 1p. Price
Materials.
44 Italics added for emphasis. Florence Price to Dr. Serge Koussevitzky, October 18, 1941. Koussevitzky Collection,
Library of Congress.
overture or suite for strings based on black American spirituals for his orchestra. It is unknown if the compositions or performances did indeed occur for this event.  

Between 1951 and the early part of 1953, Price finished what would eventually be known as *Five Folksongs in Counterpoint*, the second Violin Concerto, the chamber work *Sea Gulls*, a new arrangement of her *Suite of Negro Dances* for orchestra, and the Quintet in A Minor for Piano and Strings.  

Price was planning a trip to Europe in early 1953 as she was to be awarded the Grand Prize of France in Paris. Price excitedly corresponded about travel plans with her dear friend from Little Rock, Perry Quinney Johnston, who was to accompany her. She also wrote to publisher Kenneth F. Kimes asking him to help her promote the future sales of her published works in Europe. He obliged, and wrote a glowing letter to be presented to overseas publishers on her behalf. Her excitement for this next stage of professional life was apparent in her letters but sadly, her trip was never to come to fruition. On Sunday May 24, 1953, two days before she was meant to leave for Paris, Price entered St. Luke’s hospital. She passed away on June 3, 1953 from a cerebral hemorrhage.

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40 Brown, in *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price*, 232 asserts she was in attendance however when attempting to find programmatic proof in Fall of 2022, the Halle Orchestra asserted that unfortunately there were no programs to be examined from the spring 1951 season that could confirm or deny the performance or attendance of the composer. Further, in the letter written by Price’s friend Perry Johnston’s daughter, she asserts that Price had never been to Europe before her upcoming Paris trip.


51 Medical Certificate of Death, State of Illinois. Filed June 3, 1953.
INTRODUCTION TO ANALYSIS

The Quintet for Piano and Strings in A minor purposefully reflects what Price had referenced as the modern-day Black American experience. By the end of her life Price had composed many spirituals, art songs, piano works, and symphonies with this voice in mind. There is no specific performance or commission that Price mentioned with regard to composing the Piano Quintet. Perhaps the choice to write this Quintet had to do with the timing of her upcoming trip to Paris, or it may have been in response to Barbirolli’s request for a string suite based on spirituals. A smaller, more mobile medium for presentation of Price’s compositional voice would be logical if she were planning on touring and expanding her reach into Europe. Regardless of her reasons, Price’s desire to portray the modern Black American experience is executed elegantly in this work.

The Quintet is presented in a symphonic form, with four movements. Following traditional classical compositional arrangement of form, tempo, and genre, the first movement is titled Allegro non troppo; the second is an Andante con moto (the customary “slow movement”); the third movement is titled “Juba” (a “dance movement”); and the fourth is a Scherzo. While following this traditional form, Price found ways to incorporate African American rhythms, structures, and melodic ideas into the musical materials. With her desire to incorporate all parts of her cultural identity into her music, she created a novel form for her unique compositional voice; one that is gathered from multiple cultural viewpoints and combined into an altogether new experience, perhaps even what she thought of as an “American sonata form.”

Because the Quintet was composed so late in Price’s career,52 it is important to evaluate her entire oeuvre for compositional commonalities as well as possible source materials. This reveals that, among other sources, Price quoted from and referenced earlier works, including her First Sonata for Organ, her art song “Words for a Spiritual,” and her Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3. It is possible that further inspiration came from other, now-lost sources (especially since Price’s music was almost completely ignored for many years after her death, and many manuscripts were apparently lost or inadvertently destroyed). Yet, after careful analysis of these works, along with known compositional dates and circumstances, there are particularly sound arguments for these prior works as source materials for the Piano Quintet.

52 The last autograph on the score was 1952, a little more than a year before her death in 1953.
I. Allegro Non Troppo

When analyzing the *Allegro non troppo* first movement of the Quintet for Piano and Strings, it is vitally important to remember that Price’s education and training was, first and foremost, on keyboards, with particular focus on the organ. Neglect of his aspect of Price’s foundational music education can lead (and has actually led) scholars of Price’s music to miss certain compositional procedures that are easily explainable from an organist’s perspective.

The novel form of the *Allegro non troppo* combines the French Romantic symphonic organ traditions with a fairly typical Romantic-era understanding of sonata-allegro form, borrowing motivic material from both the first movement of Price’s own First Sonata for Organ and from her art song “Words for a Spiritual.”

Price’s reimagining of two separate but similar traditional formal structures in this movement complicates the analysis—there isn’t one single analytical tool that adequately accounts for its salient features. Only a multi-pronged analysis, combining approaches drawn from sonata-allegro form and French Romantic organ symphonies, properly explicates the complexity of what Price accomplished, and explains the majority of her compositional choices.

**Motivic and Formal Source Material**

Price’s First Sonata for Organ is a significant source of material for the Quintet. It was completed in 1927 as an exercise in composition during her summer studies with Wesley LaViolette at the Chicago Musical College. Price modeled her First Sonata directly after Félix-Alexandre Guilmant’s similarly titled First Sonata, Opus 42 (1875), the very work she had learned and performed for Guilmant while a student, and therefore a work whose melodic and harmonic structures were deeply familiar to her.

Calvert Johnson’s comparative analysis of Guilmant’s *First Sonata*, Opus 42, and Price’s *First Sonata for Organ*, details the similarities and differences between these organ works. Johnson found that the overall structure of both works' first movements were nearly identical. The first movements of both organ sonatas are in sonata-allegro form, beginning in D Minor with similar tempo markings and similarly large registrational indications. Price nods towards some of Guilmant’s rhythmic motives as well as some harmonic progressions throughout with the use of similar substantial chords and dotted rhythms. Both works end the introduction with the same harmonic progression; a Neapolitan leading to dominant harmony, with the third in the treble

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53 Guilmant’s composition was originally for the organ and orchestra which he later rewrote for organ solo. The organ solo is what Price used as her model.
voice. The remainder of Johnson’s analysis, showing the similarities between Price and Guilmant’s organ sonatas, is summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Similarities between Price’s *First Sonata for Organ* and Guilmant’s *First Sonata*, Opus 42.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price Organ Sonata</th>
<th>Guilmant Organ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Intro: Maestoso (use of full organ)</td>
<td>1. Intro: Largo e maestoso (use of full organ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Both:</td>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Both:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Begin with large chords and dotted rhythms</td>
<td>a. Begin with large chords and dotted rhythms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Conclude the intro with the same harmonic progression (the N. leading to V with 3rd in treble)</td>
<td>b. Conclude the intro with the same harmonic progression (the N. leading to V with 3rd in treble)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Sonata allegro marked</td>
<td>c. Sonata allegro marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. ST: in the relative major</td>
<td>d. ST: in the relative major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Transitions to development: iv half-dim. 6/5 to V</td>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Transitions to development: ii half-dim. 4/2 to V6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Both:</td>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Both:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Development section begins with a canon on the 1st theme</td>
<td>a. Development section begins with a canon on the 1st theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Combines fragments of the 2nd theme at same time as canon in the 1st theme is played</td>
<td>b. Combines fragments of the 2nd theme at same time as canon in the 1st theme is played</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 2nd theme is recapitulated in I</td>
<td>c. 2nd theme is recapitulated in I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Coda: 1st theme in stretto in i</td>
<td>d. Coda: 1st theme in stretto in i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Conclusion: large chords over fragments of 1st theme in pedal and hands</td>
<td>e. Conclusion: large chords over fragments of 1st theme in pedal and hands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In writing the Piano Quintet, Price used a similar compositional process as in her First Organ Sonata. Compositional techniques common in organ music\(^\text{55}\) can be found throughout the work, perhaps as a nod toward (and an attempt at continuity with) the Quintet’s inspiration. When Price quotes from her own First Sonata for Organ, it can also be considered a reference to Guilmant’s Organ Sonata. It may also be possible that with the Piano Quintet, Price was attempting to bring her major works, including her symphonies, to larger audiences.

Price’s decision not to incorporate any African-American themes in her Organ Sonata, likely due to both the composition being earlier than the Chicago Renaissance and a natural conservatism inherent in organ traditions, does not apply to the Quintet. In this work’s first movement, Price purposefully intertwined African-American musical elements with the French Romantic organ tradition.

The second source of motivic material in the Quintet was from an art song composed by Price sometime after August 1948. The lyrics of “Words for a Spiritual” were printed by an author known only as “Capricorn” in the *Chicago Tribune* on August 20, 1948. They read:\(^\text{56}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Slow me down Lawd.} \\
\text{Ah’s a-goin’ too fast;} \\
\text{Ah can’t see mah brother when he’s walkin’ past.} \\
\text{Ah miss a lot a’good things,} \\
\text{Ah miss a lot a’good things day by day;} \\
\text{Ah don’t know a blessing when it comes mah way.} \\
\text{Slow me down,} \\
\text{Lawn Ah wants to see} \\
\text{More o’the things that’s good for me.} \\
\text{A little less o’ me an’ a little more a’ You.} \\
\text{A wants the heav’nly atmosphere to trickle through.}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{55}\) Incorporation of motives in alternate ways such as in inverse or retrograde presentations were common in the baroque ornamented chorale preludes as well as in romantic era works. These counterpoint techniques are common knowledge for those who are advanced organists, as Price was.

\(^{56}\) Other than the date and source of print, nothing is known of the author, the poem’s sources, or notes of compositional interests regarding Price’s setting.
Let me help a brothuh when the goin’s rough,
Let me help a brothuh when the going’s rough;
When folks work together it ain’t so tough;
Slow me down Lawd,
Slow me down Lawd, so ah can talk with som a Yo angels.

Slow me down to a walk.
Slow me down.

Motivic and Structural Analysis: First Organ Sonata and Quintet for Piano and Strings in A minor

Compositions in the style of a French Romantic organ symphony emphasize thematic development in a similar way to the orchestral symphonic counterpart, but do not necessarily follow a strict sonata-allegro form. They tend to be primarily homophonic in nature, interspersed with fugal and canon episodes. This dual-pronged perspective is essential to a comparative analysis between Price’s Piano Quintet with her First Sonata for Organ. The similarities between the two begin with the first measure. The initial three strikes in both works–an Ur-motif–are aurally identical. (see figures 2a and 2b)

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57 French organ symphonies were compositions of three or more movements using contrasting motives and utilizing organ registrational opportunities and possibilities. The word symphonic had more to do with the registrations than form.
First Sonata for Organ

Registration
Swell: Full, excepting 16 ft. and mixtures
Great: \( \text{f} \) = Foundation stops, excepting 16 ft.
\( \text{ff} \) = Full organ
Choir: Soft 8 and 4 ft. stops
Pedal: Foundation stops, 16 and 8 ft. \( \text{ff} \) = Full
All manuals coupled

Introduction

Maestoso

Florence B. Price

Manual

Pedal
Piano Quintet in a minor

I.

Allegro non troppo

Florence B. Price

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Piano
Motif 1, beginning on the A in Violin 1 then continuing through the E, uses the first three pitches found in the accompaniment of *Words for a Spiritual* (see figure 3) as the presented in its original sequence, then in retrograde (m. 3), and once again in its original form (m. 5). Motif 1 is, from its onset, a recognition of both the cultures Price wants to represent in this movement: European art music and African-American spiritual.

**Figure 3**

Motif 2 is a counter melody, often appearing with theme one in stretto (see figure 4), that can also be taken from “Words for a Spiritual.”

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58 Similar motivic contour is found in mm.30-31 in *Words for a Spiritual.*
In the Piano Quintet, motif 2 undergoes slight motivic development in m.12 in the piano, and Theme 1 is also slightly developed in mm. 28-31 with the Violin 1 part. The significance of Motif 2 is that it is built from fragments found in *Words for a Spiritual*. It is highlighted at the end of the movement in m.260-272 as well. Compositional insertion of fragments in this way is a technique commonly used in chorale settings by organ composers.

At this point, the Quintet introduces several additional motifs not drawn from the Organ Sonata. The Quintet’s Motif 3 is a one-bar rhythmic motive initially presented in m. 36 in the piano. Similar rhythmic presentations are also found in the vocal line of “Words for a Spiritual” as well as in other spirituals. Motif 3 is quickly developed in m.42 to also include similar rhythms while appearing in all the instrumental voices. Motif 4 presents in stretto with Motif 3 as rocking thirds in m.133 in the viola then also in the other voices. (see figures 5a and 5b)

Figure 5a
Motif 5 is presented in mm. 66-72 in the Piano in its entirety then echoed in the Violin 1 in mm. 74-81 (see figure 6). Fragmentation and modulations of motif 5 begins in m. 82 and continues through to m. 115.
Figure 6
Comparing the structure and motivic use in Price’s Quintet and her First Sonata for Organ shows significant similarities between the works. Both use sonata form as a guide with neither of them adhering strictly to the formal expectations (see below for further discussion of this formal trait). The most substantial divergence from the organ sonata is the length of the Quintet’s first movement, and the extent of thematic development that the Quintet offers. The intervening 25 years between the compositions shows just how mature Price’s compositional abilities in counterpoint had become. Instead of employing only two motifs used in the original, she now utilizes five motifs. The combination and creation of motifs from multiple source materials exemplifies the blending of disparate musical cultures Price was aiming for.

Form Analysis: Sonata-Allegro Form and Quintet for Piano and Strings in A minor

Price was well-versed in the European classical musical traditions due to her early organ training and education at The New England Conservatory of Music. During this time, American music professors had typically studied overseas, learned the European musical traditions, then returned to impart those traditions. Germanic and French music training were especially prized. Advanced knowledge of formal conventions in music was most certainly instilled in conservatory students.

Price purposefully manipulated the expectations of sonata-allegro form in the Quintet’s Allegro non troppo movement to fit her aesthetic goal of synthesizing divergent musical cultures. But most of that unexpected manipulation occurs in the recapitulation, after a relatively traditional exposition and development. It is there, in the recapitulation, that significant additional materials from “Words for a Spiritual” disrupt the expectation of traditional sonata-allegro practice.

The exposition section begins with the Primary Theme (Motif 1) in mm. 1-5. Use of a countermelody (Motif 2) can be seen in strettto with fragments of the PT in m. 8. A codetta to the exposition of the primary theme begins in m.12 begins with a slight development of the countermelody. The transition is quite long (38 measures) and is heavily contrapuntal in nature. Motifs 3 and 4 are presented and manipulated to support the dizzying modulations found throughout. The initial modulation to D♭ major holds for a short while until another harmonic shift occurs. A dominant pedal and perfect authentic cadence in the relative major at m.60 establishes the expected modulation to C major.

The secondary theme (Motif 5) is presented from mm.66-72 in the right hand of the piano. Beginning with a similar intervallic structure as the primary theme (PT), the secondary theme (ST) changes texture to a lyrically soaring line, an answer to the PT’s sharpness. After the statement and immediate restatement of the ST, the relentless chromaticism begins again with a modulation to A in m. 84, the submediant of C major, followed by another modulation through
use of sequential secondary dominants back to the expected mediant modulation of C major in m. 89. At m.109 there is another complete restatement of ST in the mediant with the addition of octaves at m.113. At the fermata of m. 115 the phrase ends with an E major chord\textsuperscript{59}, a pivot on the submediant in the relative major and dominant of A minor, modulating back to the original key of A minor, beginning the codetta. The cadenza-like codetta at m.115 leads into the repeat with a half cadence. The Introduction and Exposition are repeated in their entirety.

After the exposition repeats, momentum begins to build with the restatement of the second half of the PT beginning the Development section. Aligning with expected conventions, the development section is largely modulatory and chromatic in its make up. Just as in Price’s organ work, it begins with a short canon on the PT.

In m. 133 motives 3 and 4 re-enter in similar fashion to their initial presentation while underneath, a series of supertonic, diminished 7th leading tones, and secondary dominants move the piece to a slight tonicization of C minor at m. 148. The PT is presented in stretto with the string parts bringing back the original tonic of A minor at m. 151. The PT is then presented in its entirety with the first three strikes (i.e., Motif 1) played in the Violin 1 part and continued in the piano’s right hand at the octave. Thematic fragments are found in the following few measures until a deceptive cadence at m. 165. The submediant is then treated as a pedal point before modulating to the relative major in m.179. This is a temporary idea that quickly gives way to another modulation to A major, the parallel major of the original key. She restates the ST at m. 207 in the Violin 1 then moves the remainder to the Viola. Another modulation heads back to C major where a unison restatement of ST in all string parts is supported by large arpeggiated tonic seventh chords in the piano.

With a return back to A minor in m.233, Price inserts a false recapitulation lasting just six measures. The retransition begins at m.239 and the dominant prolongation that has been long waited on since the beginning of the section is finally given at m. 247.

The recapitulation begins with a tonic prolongation in m.255. The representation of primary and secondary themes is slightly different than expected for a typical sonata-allegro, but is similar to how she presented motifs 1 and 2 in the organ sonata. The PT is presented in the original key, but not in its entirety. The first three pitches are allocated to different parts, with the rest of the theme played in stretto by both viola and cello parts in m. 255.

If motif 2 is considered the secondary theme like it is in the First Sonata for Organ, then representation of a secondary theme in the original key could be considered here. The Quintet’s ST (motif 5) is not reintroduced during this section.

\textsuperscript{59} It is possible to look at this moment as a medial caesura
At m.266, the momentum comes to an abrupt halt with an *Andante* tempo marking. Within the piano lines we find quotations of mm.13-16 of the vocal line from *Words for a Spiritual*. The text of this line reads “Ah miss a lot a’good things day by day” and an eighth note rest with a fermata\(^{60}\) ends the *Andante* section.

An even slower *Adagio* is then introduced with quotes in the violin 1 line from the accompaniment from *Words for a Spiritual*. The text in this section reads “Slow me down, Lawd”. Just as J.S. Bach did in many of his chorale preludes based on Lutheran hymn tunes, Price was influenced directly by the words of the spiritual in this new musical setting. She quite literally slowed down the entire piece to make this point.

\(^{60}\) This could be considered the repeat of the medial caesura
The first movement ends with an explosive coda at m.273. Fragments of the primary theme as well are found in the viola and upper hand of the piano. The final reference to “Words for a Spiritual” sounds in the concluding pitches for the piano, which repeat the accompaniment's opening from the spiritual.
II. Andante con moto

The Quintet’s second movement, marked *Andante con moto*, functions as the lyrical slow movement. Its melodic lines seem to be original to the composition although the melodic contours are similar to many of Price’s previous works, evoking vocal shapes frequently found in spirituals. The many modulations found throughout the work tend to happen abruptly and without notice, and yet the end result is a surprisingly graceful forward momentum.

As is often typical of slow movements in general, this second movement does not appear to adhere to a clear or typical use of any one formal structure. Indeed, there are multiple ways to analyze the movement. It could be seen as a novel approach to a rondo, the melding of a typical five-part rondo with the developments typically found in a sonata rondo; or perhaps, as a chorale prelude in the style of J.S. Bach through the use of the ritornello style. Most likely Price chose to continue melding multiple compositional styles and formal approaches.

Seen through the lens of five-part rondo form, the piece begins with a 6-bar introduction of sorts in F♯ minor, opening with dominant harmony. The primary key of A major is then established with Refrain 1 (A section) beginning at measure 6. The first full statement of Theme 1 is played at the octave by the violins in measures 15-22 (see figure 7).
Figure 7
At measure 23, Episode 1 (B section) surprises with a modulation back to the relative minor heard in the introduction (F♯ minor) instead of to the expected dominant. Theme 2 is introduced by the Violin 1 in measure 25 with some thematic fragments in the piano.

Refrain 2 occurs momentarily in A major (m.35) just long enough to re-establish the tonic before rapidly modulating yet again. Price then works through the keys of A♭ Major (m.43), B♭ Major (m.55), A Major (m.59), and B Major (m.68). Fragments of Theme 1 are found alternating between the piano and the strings throughout these modulations with the entirety of Theme 1 being represented at m.59. The transition towards the second episode begins in measure 65 in B major but does not lead to any of the expected keys traditionally used in a rondo. Instead, it settles on the key of the Neapolitan (B♭), consistent with Price’s overall inclination toward the Neapolitan found throughout the Quintet.

Episode 2 (C section) sits entirely in the key of B♭, the neapolitan of A major. Theme 3 is a two-phrase melodic line gracefully presented in the piano from measures 87-94. After a series of secondary dominants and sequential fragments, a retransition occurs using a restatement of a slightly developed Theme 3 to work towards the dominant of A, pivoting at the D.S. al Coda back to the final refrain.

Refrain 3 is much abridged but does include a complete restatement of Theme 1. The piece ends with a short Coda that contains fragments of Theme 1 and a soft landing on the A major tonic. So while five-part rondo form explains some of the features of this movement, and some of the episodic traits align partially with sonata-rondo practices, those patterns don’t account for all of the movement’s formal structure.

Reexamining the second movement with an eye towards common compositional techniques in the genre of organ chorales is also enlightening. While this movement does not fit into any traditional definition of organ chorale—except, perhaps, in its treatment of a clearly vocally-conceived melody—many of these organ techniques are easily found throughout the movement. Ritornello treatment could be applied to each section as the refrains are easily a tutti and the episodes are in solo-with-accompaniment texture.

In this light, measures 1-8 could easily be seen as an introduction for establishment of the home key of A at measure 9. Measures 7-22, the ritornello theme, utilize all voices with equal emphasis. Imitative techniques can be seen with the presentation of an incomplete subject in the violin 1 and viola voices from measures 9-14. The introduction of a primary motive (Theme 1) at measure 15 in the violin voices at the octave is accompanied by chordal figurations in the lower

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61 Episode 2 is highly modulatory, similar to the C section of a sonata rondo; however the piece in its entirety does not lend itself to a sonata-rondo form conclusion as it is not seven parts.
strings and piano. Episode 1, from measures 23-34, introduces another motive in the violin 1 voice with all other voices in support of the solo.

Ritornello 2, in mm. 35-77, contains Theme 1 fragmented with similar chordal accompaniment beginning at measure 35. This technique is continued, with the motivic fragments alternating between the piano and differing string voices through measure 86.

The piano takes the solo in the next episode at measure 87. While there is a flowing accompaniment within the piano, the motif is clearly heard and is lightly accompanied by the strings. The D.S. al Coda takes the work back to the original ritornello for an abridged section that leads quickly to the coda.

And yet, lacking a clear precedent in either a stand-alone hymn tune or an overt invocation of a neo-baroque aesthetic, this movement isn’t fully explained by chorale prelude or ritornello form, either.

The principle features that undermine a solid assignment to one particular formal pattern in this movement are Price’s treatment of rhythm, tempo, and her use of changing meter in the movement. Common time is used for the first 6 measures with a change thereafter to cut time. This is maintained until measure 50 where she changes to 3/2 for one measure, back to cut time for three measures, back to 3/2 for one measure, then again to cut time for four measures until a change to common time at m. 59. Maintaining this meter for only 19 measures, she makes multiple tempo changes within, such as the meno mosso at measure 65 as well as a piacere and accelerandos. Price returns to cut time again at measure 78 for a brief 8 measures and then switches to common time at measure 86, finally returning and finishing the piece in cut time with the return to the D.S. al Coda. This complicated rhythmic movement is quite uncommon in a slow movement, but it does not detract from the lyricism of the piece. In fact, it mimics the improvisatory and rolling rhythmic movement often found in spirituals, which are clearly an ever-present inspiration for the movement.

Again, Price shows with the *Andante con moto* that she can masterfully manipulate structural norms and unexpected compositional techniques together, in her attempt to unite European and African-American musical practices in a reflection of her own experience and milieu.
III. Juba

This was not the first time Price chose to include the African-inspired “Juba” in her work. Both her Symphony no. 1 and Symphony no. 3 use a Juba as a third movement. It seems to have been an almost obligatory inclusion in Price’s multi-movement works, a repeated nod to her Black heritage. She wrote, in reference to her Symphony No.3, “In all of my works which have been done in the sonata form with Negroid idiom, I have incorporated a juba as one of the several movements because it seems to me to be no more impossible to conceive of Negroid music devoid of the spiritualistic theme on the one hand than strongly syncopated rhythms of the juba on the other.”

The Juba, like the minuet, is a dance, so its adoption in the place of a traditional minuet in a multi-movement work still maintains contact with European concert-music traditions, while adapting them to the African-American experience.

As a juba is an African dance that is rhythmically focused, Price’s inclusion of a distinctive Rhythmic Theme is only logical, and can be found throughout the entire movement in full presentation as well as in fragmented states. (As in Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, the rhythmic theme is more salient than the melodic contours of its first presentation, and it is the rhythmic motif rather than pitch content, tonal center, or harmonic patterns, that unifies Price’s Juba.)

**Rhythmic Theme**

The A section (mm.1-16) starts with Theme 1 firmly in F, though the harmonic progression is less obviously stated. Beginning with a submediant seventh in first inversion that moves through the mediant to a very quick half cadence only to sit once more on the submediant, again in first inversion with an added flat ninth, quickly moving through tonic, supertonic, the sense of arrival at a perfect authentic cadence doesn’t occur until measure 8.

This emphasis on the submediant had already been well-established in the Quintet’s previous movements, and at this point might be said to represent a kind of overall unifying gesture between the movements. The Juba exhibits a rigorously sectional arrangement, with almost

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63 Also known as Juba Dance or “Patting Juba”
every section offering a new theme, which again preempts a clear decision on formal structure.⁶⁴ Many of the modulations happen quite abruptly, in similar fashion to the *Andante con moto*, creating excitement and freshness with each change.

All of the themes in this movement are presented in a call and response style. Even the rhythmic theme is most often presented in pairs.⁶⁵ Theme 1 (mm.1-4) is first found in the violin 1 with the response directly after in the same line. It is then presented in the viola at m.9 with the response at pickup to m.13. The Rhythmic theme is initially found in the piano at m.1 with its response at m.2.

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⁶⁴ The a section is the only one repeated for a total of three times.
⁶⁵ See Quick Reference Chart for Juba form
The subsequent large sectional modulations are nearly all marked with changes in the key signatures, emphasizing again the purposefully composed sectional nature of the Juba. The B section (mm.17-36) begins with a quick change to D♭ major (again, emphasizing the submediant), beginning a chain of modulations of thirds. The B section contains Theme 2 which is first presented in the violin 2 part (see figure 8). There is another modulation to B♭ major which transitions into the C section at m.37.

Figure 8
The C section presents Theme 3 in B♭ major in the piano part. Continuing in the call and response presentation, there is a quick interaction between piano and violin 1 which creates a momentum that is suspended with a fermata at the end of the section (see figure 9).

Figure 9
The D section begins in m.51 with a quick modulation to D major. The rhythmic theme is the focus of this section with approximately 14 presentations in quick succession through the parts. There are two instances of Theme 3 presented in inverse in m.51 with the response in m.52 (see figure 10).

Figure 10

The E section is the largest of all the sections (mm.67-105) and is highly transitional in nature and motivic in its makeup. It begins in G♭ major presenting motif 1 in mm.67-68 (see figure 11a), moving to A major and then C major with presentation of motif 2 in mm.75-76 (see figure 11b). F♯ major and more of motif 2 follow at m.77 with a rapid modulation using thirds to A♭ major and motif 1.

The next move is to A minor with presentation of motif 3 in the violin 1 and an amazing presentation of a quick walking blues bass line in the piano using the same pentatonic pitch collection as the main theme in C (see figure 11c). If Price’s intent was to take this piece on tour as a presentation of the modern Black American sound, then it would seem prudent to include a nod to blues and jazz, two of the most popular forms of American music at the time.

A final modulation to D minor in m.96 completes the section.
An exact repeat of the A section follows in the original tonic of F major at m.106. The repetition hints at possible familiarity of form but then immediately continues on with a new section and material.

The F section (mm.122-137) begins with a modulation back to D minor in m.122 and a presentation of Theme 4 (see figure 12)
The final A section (mm.138-146) contains the entirety of Theme 1 in the original tonic of F major.

The coda begins in m. 147 in D major and moves through F# major (again, a significant gesture towards an enharmonic Neapolitan), and F major. A fragmented presentation of Theme 1 is emphasized through all parts. With an arpeggiated flourish, the piano closes the piece with an energetic fortissimo tonic chord.

With its title of Juba, clear rhythmically-dance energy, and references to blues, jazz, and stride piano textures, this movement is the most overtly “African-American” in the Quintet. But by adopting that position, it parallels the traditional place of the minuet in classical Viennese four-movement formats—a dance movement that openly expresses the cultural origins that inform the work’s other movements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
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<th>Tonal Centers</th>
<th>Themes/Motives</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1-16</td>
<td>F major</td>
<td>Theme 1 &amp; Rhythmic Theme (present in all sections)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>17-36</td>
<td>D♭ major/B♭ major</td>
<td>Theme 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>37-50</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>51-66</td>
<td>D major</td>
<td>Theme 3 in inversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>67-105</td>
<td>G♭ major/A Major/ C major/F♯ Major / A♭ major/A minor/d minor</td>
<td>Motive 1, Motive 2, Motive 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
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<td>122-137</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>138-146</td>
<td>F major</td>
<td>Theme 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>147-end</td>
<td>D major/ F♯ Major/ F Major</td>
<td>Theme 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Scherzo

Employing a *Scherzo* in 6/8 as a finale was typical of Price’s symphonic compositional style. In her Symphony no. 1 she titled the movement as Finale but wrote it in similar fashion to the scherzos found in both her Symphony no. 3 as well as the Quintet.\(^6\) The use of the title of *Scherzo* may have had more to do with the desired tempo rather than adherence to the expected form of a symphonic scherzo.

The scherzos found in the Symphony no. 3, the Quintet, and the Finale of the Symphony no. 1 are all very similarly constructed. All are in a duple meter of 6/8, and have a four measure primary theme consisting of a triplet figure that uses a minor pentatonic scale.

The Quintet’s scherzo, in the work’s home key of A minor, begins with the presentation of the primary theme in the violin 1 voice. After the initial presentation a countermelody joins in at m.9 in the violin voice with the primary theme in the viola, and through the rest of the A section (see figure 13).

\(^6\) Her Piano Sonata for which she won the Wannamaker prize uses a *Scherzo* in its third movement as well.
Figure 13

IV. Scherzo
The B section begins at m.38 with a key change to G major. Its theme is lyrical in nature. The secondary theme is in the violin 1 voice then repeated in the piano at m.42 in a call and response style (see figure 14). Fragments of the theme are found throughout the section in other parts. At m. 72 the triplet figure is reintroduced as the B section re-transitions back into A minor leading to the repeated A section. While in many scherzos the repeated A section is altered slightly\footnote{This alteration would lead to the ABA’ form where this is an ABACoda.}, this is repeated verbatim until the \textit{DC al segno}.
Figure 14
Entry into the coda is created with momentum-producing triplet figures outlining G-augmented and F-augmented chords. The 64-bar coda is quite lengthy, as is the coda from Price’s *Symphony no. 3*. The triplet figure is hammered out with an arpeggiation of the tonic chord creating a firm stance in the home key of A minor. As this exciting coda progresses, Price manages to develop the coda’s material harmonically for just a bit longer before returning to a final tonic pedal. She chooses to end her piece with large tonic chords, just as in her Symphony no. 3.

A formally and motivically straightforward finale is certainly not unusual in classical European four-movement works. But coming as it does immediately after a Juba, these final two movements of Price’s Quintet might be usefully considered as forming a pair that unite European and African-American styles in combination, rather than within the movements.

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68 Symphony no. 3 has a 70 bar coda.
CONCLUSION

Florence Price’s later compositions were thoughtful and masterful. Her desire to portray in her music a blend of cultural influences and experiences (that were largely unique to her) was ahead of her time. Perhaps this is the main reason Price’s work was neglected for so long; because of race, gender, and temperament, she didn’t fit into the prevailing American notion of who a composer should be, and what kind of music they should write. She also didn’t conform to the idea that classical music created by a composer of color should sound “Black” in the way that a White majority of classical music listeners deemed it should. For a composer of color in the early 20th century, Price had unusually deep understanding of European art music repertoire, an unusual degree of acceptance into White musical and social spaces, and an extraordinary ability to move through those spaces in her compositions in ways that, she hoped, represented a future of Black/White integration and mutual respect.

Price’s Quintet for Piano and Strings in A minor is a profound and substantial statement of the belief that not only can music represent multiple cultures simultaneously but that by doing so, new and exciting forms of music will result. The manner in which Price was able to synthesize influences from the European canon of French Romantic organ works, the tradition of African-American spirituals (both from oral tradition and newly-written spirituals composed by Price herself), the juba, and Price’s own symphonic works (which are themselves magnificent demonstrations of multicultural synthesis) is unprecedented. The ingenuity and sophistication of Price’s mastery in multiple cultural languages—formed through her unusual level of access to privilege and opportunity—is manifest in the Quintet and other works, and evidence of her importance to the development of a truly American voice and vocabulary in music. The rescue and advocacy of Price’s music, after its near-annihilation following her death, has begun to gain the momentum that its quality deserves. Florence Price and her music should be spoken of in every music classroom and should be performed as much.

The need for further research into other underrepresented and historically marginalized composers like Florence Price is overwhelming. For so long, the value system historically held by White music scholars has been skewed by biased cultural priorities that sidelined not only Price, but many others like her. The endemic lack of diversity in the current musical canon has resulted in substantial losses of potential masterpieces, such as with the music of Florence Price.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


