MUSIC NOTES FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 18

In celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend, today's services feature a number of compositions by Black composers and several traditional spirituals sung congregationally or played in instrumental arrangements.

PALMER HALL SERVICE:

"This little light of mine," which is thought to have roots as a traditional spiritual, took on new life in the 1960s as a well-known and beloved anthem of the Civil Rights Movement. As Freedom Singer Rutha Mae Harris explained to NPR, singing the song's joyful words and music gave her and her fellow activists comfort and courage in the face of danger, steadying their nerves: "Music was an anchor. It kept us from being afraid... It played a very important role in the movement."

The tune of **Hymn 529, In Christ there is no East or West,** *McKee*, also has ties to the spiritual tradition. The version we use from The Hymnal 1982, our hymnal at St. Stephen's, was adapted and arranged by the celebrated Black American composer and songwriter, Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949). The hymn's words, written by John Oxenham, emphasize the message of Christian unity and the "great fellowship of love… whate'er your race may be."

9 AND 11:15 A.M. SERVICES

A native of Arkansas, **Florence Price** (1887-1953) was a pianist and organist, as well as a trailblazer in music composition; her Symphony in E minor–premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra–was the first work by a Black woman to be performed by a major orchestra. "**Adoration**," while written for use in church and specifically for the season of Epiphany, also hints at her background as a silent film organist in its harmonic language.

The text for **Holy God, you raise up prophets (*Martin's Song*)** draws upon texts celebrating seven Black saints: Absalom Jones, Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther King, Jr., Cyprian of Carthage, Monica of Hippo, Simon of Cyrene, and Phillip the Evangelist. **Carl Haywood**'s tune fits the poem expertly and has been included in recognition of the importance of Martin Luther King Day both in the church and in the world. The church commemorates the faithful departed on the anniversary of the day they entered eternal life while the secular world thinks in terms of birthdays; thus, the civil holiday is celebrated on or near the anniversary of his birth, January 15. This hymn is included in two Episcopal hymnal supplements, *Wonder, Love and Praise*, Hymn 792, and *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*, Hymn 46.

Dr. David Hurd (b. 1950) was Professor of Sacred Music and Director of Chapel Music at the General Theological Seminary, New York City, for 39 years, and is presently the Director of Music at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in New York's Times Square. His Epiphany anthem, **"We have seen his star,"** interweaves a gently driving rhythmic ostinato with a swirling, melismatic melody moving in colorful parallel seventh chords. With its many

alleluias, the piece captures the joy and light of Epiphany as well as moments of hushed wonder at the birth of Jesus.

David Hurd's communion anthem **"Taste and see"** sets the eighth verse of Psalm 34. Hurd casts the text "Taste and see that the Lord is good" as an antiphon, which bookends contrasting music for "Happy are they who trust in him."

Sometimes referred to as the "Black National Anthem," **Hymn 599. Lift every voice and sing** was written at the turn of the 20th century by brothers James Weldon Johnson and John Rosamond Johnson. The former was a prominent academic, civil rights activist, and literary figure of the Harlem Renaissance, serving as both the first Black professor at New York University and executive secretary of the NAACP. James Weldon Johnson's text reflects on the wide sweep of U.S. history, solemnly acknowledging the "weary years" and "silent tears" of the "dark past," but also expressing a message of extraordinary resilience and profound hope for the future.

Conductor, composer, and organist **Dr. Carl Haywood** (b. 1949) is a native of Portsmouth, Virginia and a graduate of Norfolk State University, Southern Methodist University, and the University of Southern California. He was a longtime faculty member at Norfolk State University and served as organist and choirmaster at Grace Episcopal Church of Norfolk, Virginia for 25 years; Haywood was also an editor and notable contributor to the Episcopal hymnal supplements *Lift Every Voice and Sing*; *Wonder, Love, and Praise*; and *Voices Found*. His **Improvisation on *We Shall Overcome*** exuberantly sets the gospel song of the name, which rose to prominence as one of the Civil Rights Movement's most iconic protest anthems. Haywood's setting is dedicated to Mark and Virginia Whitmire, the longtime choirmasters of St. James's Episcopal Church in Richmond.

CELTIC EVENSONG:

The spiritual **Let us break bread together** traces its roots to coastal South Carolina. Early written records of the hymn, dating from the 1920s, are linked to the Penn School on St. Helena Island, the first school for formerly enslaved West Africans in the South. Hymnologist Carl Daw has suggested that the text's imagery of taking Communion "on our knees" and "with my face to the rising sun" could point towards historical practices of the Episcopal Church. Daw notes, "[M]any colonial churches had one or more windows on the east wall. These were originally all clear glass, though some examples, such as those at St. Philip's Church and St. Michael's Church in Charleston, South Carolina, are now filled with stained glass, or the east window is now blocked by later renovations, as at Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg, Virginia. So the experience of receiving Communion on one's knees would often involve facing such a bright window."

Virginia Beach-based composer **Adolphus Hailstork** (b. 1941) has taught on the faculty of Norfolk State University and Old Dominion University. His **Prelude on *We Shall Overcome*** sets the gospel song of the same name, which rose to prominence as one of the Civil Rights Movement's most iconic protest anthems. Hailstork draws on Baroque musical style in his setting, particularly in the piece's trio texture.

Composer and baritone **Harry Thacker Burleigh** (1866–1949) played a significant role in the development of American art song—composing over 200 works in the genre—and was the first Black composer acclaimed for his concert songs as well as for his adaptations of spirituals. Burleigh enjoyed a close professional relationship with Czech composer Antonín Dvořák during the latter's three-year stay in the United States and integrally influenced the composition of Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 ("From the New World"). His arrangement of ***Deep River***, published in 1917, was so successful that it prompted the publishing of a dozen more spirituals the same year.

Florence Price, "Adoration": see 9 and 11:15 a.m. service note

"**In de col' moonlight**" is the third movement of **Harry T. Burleigh**'s ***From the Southland***, a suite of short pieces inspired by the American South. The work draws influence from Black music and culture and stands as an example of the uniquely "American" musical sound that Burleigh helped pioneer.

Black Canadian-American composer and keyboardist **Robert Nathaniel Dett** (1882–1943) was a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music. Dett's *Eight Bible Vignettes* is a collection of eight character pieces, the first four of which draw on material from the Old Testament, and the second four pieces from the New Testament. "**Desert Interlude**," the second piece of the set, is based on Abraham's banishment of Hagar and their son Ishmael to the desert. Imagining Hagar's perspective, Dett ponders: "What should she do? Was there no hope? Had God, even as Abraham, forsaken her?"

Missouri native **Eugene Hancock** (1929–1993) served on the music faculty of Manhattan Community College (CUNY) as well as at a number of New York City churches, including as assistant organist and choirmaster of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine. "**Swing low, sweet chariot**" comes from a larger collection of spiritual settings by Hancock intended to be "simple… but in the style in which I improvise [on the organ]."

Composer and social justice activist **Margaret Bonds** (1913–1972) was among the first Black women to be nationally recognized for her compositions. A student of Florence Price, Bonds was also a highly accomplished pianist, becoming the first Black soloist to perform with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at age 20. Bonds arranged a number of spirituals for solo piano and voice and piano, including **"This little light of mine,"** a prominent anthem of the Civil Rights Movement.

—Diana Chou, Associate Director of Music