

Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major

Florence Price (1887-1952)

Florence Price achieved notable distinction as the first African-American woman whose music was performed by a major orchestra. Her training at the prestigious New England Conservatory of Music prepared her well as an outstanding composer, but she faced serious obstacles as both a woman and Negro during an era of intense racial and sexual discrimination. Her major break came in 1932 when her First Symphony won the Wanamaker Music Composition Contest, which led to the premier of that work the following year with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Another notable opportunity occurred several years later when Marian Anderson sang one of Price's arrangements during her historic concert at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Following her death in 1952, Price's reputation as a respected composer began to fade, until 2009 when, by chance, an accumulation of her works and papers were discovered in an abandoned, dilapidated house near Chicago that had served as her former summer home. A manuscript of her Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major was among those compositions discovered.

The opening *Tempo moderato* presents graceful melodies in a gentle interplay between solo violin and the orchestral instruments, at times even resembling a "call-and-response" among the instruments, most notably involving the flute. The music builds to an exciting climax between the orchestra and the violin's virtuosic display. The second movement *Andante* creates a much gentler atmosphere. The violin's move to a minor key creates a somewhat sorrowful sound, perhaps reminiscent of the sorrow songs. The movement closes in gentle stillness.

The brilliant finale *Allegro* opens with a passage technically demanding for the soloist and exuberantly exciting for the listener. Eventually a quick, more melodic theme emerges in the

violin, followed by other instruments, particularly the flute. The driving momentum between soloist and orchestra creates a feeling of perpetual motion; eventually the two musical forces come together with a flourish for the close.