

AMERICAN MASTER COMPOSER  
William Grant Still  
1895-1978

Firsts by American Master Composer William Grant Still...

William Grant Still was the first person of Color:

- ♪ To have a major work performed by a major American symphony orchestra.
- ♪ To conduct a major American symphony orchestra.
- ♪ To write the theme music for a World's Fair.
- ♪ To conduct a symphony orchestra in the Deep South.
- ♪ To conduct on national radio.
- ♪ To arrange for a national radio program (the first popular national radio program), "Deep River".
- ♪ To have an opera done by a major American company.
- ♪ To have an opera televised.
- ♪ To write for the United Nations.

William Grant Still was the first person of Color in the CLASSICAL field of music:

- ♪ To have a documentary done for television.
- ♪ To have a sold-out recording.
- ♪ To be invited to the White House.

William Grant Still was the first person of ANY Color:

- ♪ To crossover from jazz and blues into the concert hall with Negro idioms (Gershwin was NOT the first, as he copied Still).
- ♪ To introduce many jazz and band instruments to the concert hall (like the vibraphone, the banjo, tom-toms, Harmon and fibre mutes, and many other non-traditional instruments).
- ♪ To write a ballet with voices as part of the plot, (Aaron Copland falsely claimed to have been the first).
- ♪ To write a ballet with a serious African subject.
- ♪ To change American opera and American radio by introducing a new totally American sound. (After Still, all media composers copied his techniques.)
- ♪ To change opera by eliminating the overture, weaving the recitative into the fabric of the whole and making the set-piece ballet part of the plot. (Before Still, all operas were European in tradition with the stilted way of impelling the action.)
- ♪ To invent the fingernail pizzicato.

William Grant Still's "The Afro-American Symphony" is the most performed and most-beloved American symphony in history.