

INTRODUCTION

This book is a specimen of polyphony. Through the two works that are its subject, we can hear the voice of Margaret Allison Bonds (1913–72): composer, pianist, Black feminist, racial-justice warrior, humanitarian. Through these musical utterances, her voice in turn enables us to hear the voices of her distinguished collaborators and sources of inspiration – voices that include W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Adele Addison, Betty Allen, Will Marion Cook, Abbie Mitchell, and Leontyne Price, among others. Through them, too, we hear the voices of millions of other participants in the great racial-justice movements of the twentieth century in America and beyond. *The Montgomery Variations* and *Credo* of Margaret Bonds not only enable us to understand the historical roots of these movements and the lived experiences and ideas, aspirations and hopes and sufferings of their participants, but also empower us to recognize those movements’ affinities to our own time and the pressing need for latter-day folk to (as the composer herself put it) “go farther.”¹

In order to provide a framework for that polyphony, this Introduction begins by summarizing each of the societal currents that made up those social-justice movements and explaining how these developments connected to the life and work of the composer of *The Montgomery Variations* and *Credo*. This done, it then more directly connects those contextual notes to the personal and professional circumstances that inspired those two works, offering a brief, thematically organized summary of the upbringing, education, and career of Margaret Bonds.

The Great Migration

In 1903, W. E. B. Du Bois (1867–1963), whose 1904 *Credo* would provide the text for the largest choral composition of Margaret Bonds in the mid-1960s, famously declared that “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.”² This prophetic observation was born of Du Bois’s pioneering sociological observations of Black–White relations in the world around him and the post-Reconstruction era, as well as his documentation and understanding of the transatlantic slave trade, slavery, and post-Civil War White subjugation of Blacks in the United States (memorialized through the notorious Jim Crow system and granted a specious veneer of legal validity through court cases such as *Plessy v. Ferguson*), and the emergent exodus of Southern Blacks to the urban North. After 1906, however, he came increasingly under the sway of the thinking of distinguished Columbia University anthropologist Frans Boas (1858–1942), who definitively refuted claims for a biological basis for scientific racism and, in a powerful commencement speech given at Du Bois’s own Atlanta University, documented sub-Saharan Africa’s primordial contributions to ancient civilization and to world culture generally.³ The realization of the predominant White culture’s erasure of these contributions from historical narratives, and consequent suppression (or theft) of Blacks’ distinguished history and heritage,⁴ combined with the sociologist Du Bois’s understanding that the “White” populations who, especially since the Berlin Congo Congress of 1884, exercised colonial, economic, legal, and military dominance over peoples of color in Africa and Asia actually constituted a minority of the world population.⁵ To the end of his life, then, he argued that the color line was not entirely an American phenomenon, as many initially construed it, but rather a global one – what he termed “the world color line.” A pan-African alliance of peoples of color worldwide, collectively rejecting these tools of White dominance, was the key to global equality in its purest possible form.

The urban concentrations of diasporic populations of color that were made possible by the mass exodus of Blacks from the sharecropping, peonage, and Black Codes of the Jim Crow South

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were a crucial step in the direction of this quest for racial-justice and anti-colonialist global equality, for they offered migrant Blacks a sense of collective identity and solidarity that were systemically denied them in the geographically dispersed rural environs of the South. Even though formerly enslaved Southern Blacks had worked their entire lives for no wages and with no education or property through the Civil War (1861–65), and thus had no viable capital to put toward the cost of a relocation across hundreds of miles, they began abandoning their former enslavers' lands and moving north already in the 1870s: between 1870 and 1910 some 410,000 Blacks emigrated from the South to the North, the West, and Canada, leaving behind the brutal oppression and deprivation of the former slave states and seeking education, family, opportunity, work, and a fresh start.⁶ Those figures surged after about 1915 as the White-on-Black violence, anti-Black culture, and disfranchisement at the ballot box of the South worsened, even as the demand for munitions for use in World War I offered new, previously unthinkable opportunities for employment in the North, and with it education and enfranchisement. Between 1919 and 1970, an estimated six million Blacks migrated. While some of this movement was cyclical, from rural to urban areas within the South (especially Atlanta, Georgia; Charleston, North Carolina; Dallas, Texas; and Memphis, Tennessee), most of it was from the South to the North, the West, or Canada. Over time, this exodus devastated the Southern economy and transformed the map of Black life beyond the former Mason–Dixon line.⁷ The migrants' paths to the nearest and best destinations were guided in part by the Eastern seaboard and major rivers, but they were also guided by the very railroads whose segregational practices were one of the hated symbols of the Jim Crow South. The six most important destination cities were Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis. In a touch of beautifully poetic irony, those rail lines and the Southern sufferings they symbolized were memorialized by migrants to these metropolises in literature, music (especially spirituals and the blues), and the visual arts – so that in the arts the hated segregated rail lines became, in the words of Farrah Griffin, “a symbol of escape to freedom.”⁸

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As we shall see, Margaret Bonds enjoyed strong ties to most of these municipal symbols of freedom reclaimed. She was born, raised, and educated in Chicago; frequently traveled to Detroit; was a favorite in the music pages of the African American press in Philadelphia; was based in New York for most of the period 1939–67; and spent extensive time in Los Angeles. As an African American woman, she knew that freedom from the Jim Crow South was a far cry from true freedom. Her native Chicago, founded by a Black man, Jean Baptiste Point du Sable (1745–1818), was also home to one of the early twentieth century’s most notorious race riots (in 1919, when she was six years old) and was firmly segregated. White Chicagoans’ “restrictive covenants” meant that African Americans had to live in the metropolis’s “Black Belt” on the south side – an area that was publicly (and not misleadingly) promoted as home to “race” culture and enterprise, but whose economy was equally or more driven by the illegal lottery known as “policy” and other criminal enterprises, as well as the thriving entertainment district known as the Stroll (where Bonds’s friend and mentor Florence Price worked for a time shortly after her move to Chicago⁹).

New York’s Harlem is usually cited as the most important destination of Southern Blacks in the Great Migration, but Chicago was arguably an even more important magnet for Black solidarity and community, for it was home to an integrated movie theater, a high school that hired Black teachers, and, perhaps most importantly, the *Chicago Defender*, the first African American newspaper to achieve a readership of more than 100,000, which was covertly distributed in the South and intrepid in its denunciations of the South and its promotion of the North (especially Chicago) as a land of promise and opportunity.¹⁰ As Du Bois had foreseen, the demographic concentration of communities of color, for all its privations, also produced cultural, economic, and political solidarity, so that Chicago’s painful segregation and vice laid the seed for a lifelong commitment to social justice and an ethos of racial uplift in the creative imagination of the young and brilliant Margaret Bonds.

One telling indication of this socially conscious artistic commitment on Bonds’s part was the penchant for collaborative creation

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that she displayed throughout her career. Another – dating from just weeks before the second Southern tour that would complete the inspiration for *The Montgomery Variations* – was a ballet for which she composed the score (now lost) many years later. The work was written for the dance company of African American choreographer and dancer Talley Beatty (1918–95), a protégé of Katherine Dunham who, like Bonds, grew up in Chicago. Known for “coolly empathetic portraits of inner-city life and for high-energy, technically demanding jazz innovations,”¹¹ Beatty on March 7, 1964, staged a production with music by Bonds that “show[ed] the Negro, first in Africa, then on the slave block, and finally caught up in other incidents of racial injustice.”¹² Response was lukewarm, but the work as a whole reflects Bonds’s enduring cognizance of the intersection of racial injustice and Black creative solidarity.

Its title: *The Migration*.

Black Renaissances: Harlem, Chicago, Los Angeles

One effect of the Great Migration predicted by Du Bois was the great flowering of African American cultural production that resulted when Black folk gathered together in a spirit of creative community and solidarity. The prediction is important because of its consilience with Du Bois’s pan-Africanist agenda and its assertion of the oneness of art, economics, politics, and society as a whole – for its affirmation of the power and dignity of a Black creative imagination that the dominant-caste non-Black rulers of the world strove mightily to suppress and deny.

It is also important, though, for the ways in which it departs from much of Du Bois’s other work. Much of Du Bois’s training and work as an empirical sociologist led him to geographically and politically focused inquiries and conclusions (“The Negroes of Farmville, Virginia: A Social Study,” 1898; *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, 1899; *The Georgia Negro: A Social Study*, 1900; etc.); this aspect of his work, together with his understanding of the extraordinary individualized diversity of Black folk and peoples of color generally, was central to the prophetic intersectionality and resistance to what Reiland Rabaka has termed “epistemic apartheid” that characterized much of his

thinking.¹³ But the flourishing of Black cultural production that he predicted, and worked to achieve, as a result of the resettlement of millions of Black folk into communities was not geographically, culturally, or politically particularized. Rather, Du Bois's vision for non-White diasporic people's cultural renaissance was of a supranational, indeed global nature, one that would transcend the historical subjugation of what he called "the darker races" and their cultures – effectively emancipating, internationally, a facet of human creativity that had been both suppressed and denied.

As is well known, the separately named "Black renaissances" of the twentieth century – the "Harlem renaissance," "Black Chicago renaissance," and so on – were so named only after the fact and were, for much of the twentieth century, considered part of a larger "New Negro" movement. In effectively creating these separate historiographic articulations of what contemporary contributors and observers such as Du Bois and Alain Locke considered a single multifaceted cultural movement,¹⁴ the voluminous scholarship on the "Black renaissances" of the twentieth century has created anachronistic narratives of geographically particularized cultural flowerings, each of which eventually failed or faded: the Harlem Renaissance is discussed as a phenomenon chronologically as well as geographically discrete from the Black Chicago Renaissance, and both are portrayed as things that ultimately failed, yielding to what became the West Coast Black Renaissance. These portrayals are misleading in their depictions of these proliferations of Black cultural production as overlapping but ultimately separate and, in some sense, competing phenomena rather than facets of a long and overarching Black cultural renaissance that manifested itself in not just Harlem, Chicago, and Los Angeles but also Detroit, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and dozens of other urban areas – and is ongoing still today. They also assert a series of narratives of failure where a narrative of expansion and prodigious growth is appropriate. If we set aside these anachronistic narratives of failure and recognize the extraordinary Black cultural production of the twentieth century on its own terms, then we can not only dispense with the implied inadequacy and negativity that inevitably result when commentators assign more-or-less arbitrary endings to events still ongoing, while

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acknowledging the vital air of community and cultural solidarity that existed among the participants in, and observers of, that flourishing. Acknowledging that the boundaries between, for instance, the “Harlem Renaissance” and the “Black Chicago Renaissance” are anachronistic historiographic artifices in turn also enables us to glimpse the freedom of the many and varied currents and cross-currents entailed in the robust exchange of art, letters, literature, and music among these cities and the movement of newly affluent Black folk among those locales.¹⁵

The benefits to such a rethinking are many. By declining to create artificial aesthetic distinctions and contradictions where only variations existed, we can acknowledge the various geographic iterations of this cultural flourishing as an ongoing collective moment when (to borrow Carolyn Denard’s characterization of the Harlem iteration) “the creative arts, *not* economic determinism, *nor* political strategy, *nor* constitutional rhetoric, *nor* military strength, but the *arts* were believed to be an agent through which individuals could effect social change” (emphasis original).¹⁶ Further, in recognizing that assertion of artistic agency in social change, we can acknowledge the shared emphasis on racial and gender justice that characterized all these flourishings and the role that all played in laying the foundation for the mature Civil Rights Movement. And to make these movements concretely relevant to the focal points of this book: the Civil Rights Movement, which was a rebellion against the Jim Crow South and an extension of the long Black cultural renaissance, is a movement whose articulated beginning is generally considered to be the Montgomery bus boycott (1955–56), which, as we shall see, was the principal inspiration for Margaret Bonds’s *Montgomery Variations*.

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This view of the several geographic iterations of an overarching Black cultural renaissance rooted in the desire for social change and directly connected to the Civil Rights Movement concurs with the geography of Margaret Bonds’s creative life. She was born and raised in Chicago and began her career there; spent most of her life

based in Harlem; had two important stays in Los Angeles (1942–43 and 1967–72); and traveled frequently among the other urban areas that were the principal sites of Black cultural production. In addition to the two Southern tours that led directly to *The Montgomery Variations* and indirectly to the *Credo*, she maintained extensive connections with major Southern cultural hubs, including Atlanta, Fisk University (Nashville, Tennessee), and the Hampton Institute (Hampton, Virginia). Her work as a solo and collaborative pianist addressed itself to vernacular and cultivated tastes, stereotypically Black and stereotypically White ones alike. Her letters and musical compositions reveal a keen appetite for poetry and for literature generally, and her music reflects an extraordinary fluency in virtually every style and genre of her day, a stylistic versatility that defied conventional barriers of race and caste. And through it all the ideas of artists and the arts as agents of social change, of giving voice to the voiceless, affirmation to the oppressed, and inspiration to the hopeless ran like a red thread.

Margaret Bonds's forty-two-year career as social-justice advocate was inculcated in her by her parents. Her father, Monroe Alpheus Majors (1864–1960), a medical doctor originally from Texas who practiced in Texas, California, and Illinois, was a lifelong activist and advocate for Black folk generally and Black women especially – an intersectional advocacy that is clearly mirrored in Margaret Bonds's own life and work.¹⁷ He grew up in Reconstruction and during that short spell of new prospects for Black folk served as a page in the Texas state legislature – but had to flee the state in the aftermath, when White-against-Black violence spiraled. He established a medical association for Black doctors (who were not allowed in the American Medical Association) and, after moving to Los Angeles in 1888, became the first African American to practice medicine west of the Rocky Mountains. He was an associate of Frederick Douglass and a longtime friend of Paul Laurence Dunbar. He also wrote for African American newspapers and authored one of the first published books for Black children, the 1893 lexicon *Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Activities* (Jackson, TN: M.V. Lynk). The preface to that volume, the title page of which asserts that “the

highest mark of our prosperity, and the strongest proofs of Negro capacity to master the sciences and fine arts, are evinced by the advanced positions to which Negro women have attained,” contains words that might well have been written by his daughter, who would be born twenty years later:

The world is full of books, yet few of them appeal directly and peculiarly to the Negro race. Many . . . have their beginning and ending in fancy, without special design for the elevation of mind or the culture of literary taste and pure morals, but for entertainment and amusement and gratification of sentiment without utility to the reader in any sense whatsoever. We commend [the following] pages to the reading world, trusting that they will for long stand out in bold relief, a signification of Negro progress.¹⁸

Although Margaret Bonds would later write that her father had “great intellect” and could have been “a great man had he not tried to conform to the taboos, inhibitions and the rest of them,”¹⁹ she apparently was never close to him; her parents separated when she was two, and the marriage was annulled when she was six.²⁰ Instead, her correspondence makes clear that she revered her mother, Estella C. Bonds (1882–1957), who taught her music and the importance of advancing the welfare of Black folk through education, music, and the arts generally.²¹ Educated at Chicago Musical College, Estella Bonds was the longtime organist at Chicago’s historic Berean Baptist Church, a charter member of the National Association of Negro Musicians, and a founding faculty member of the city’s Coleridge-Taylor School of Music. Her modest home on the south side of the segregated city hosted weekly salons and was a frequent haunt of Black artistic notables – among them Bonds’s composition teacher Will Marion Cook (1869–1944); poet Countee Cullen (1903–46); composer William Levi Dawson (1899–1990); soprano Lillian Evanti (1890–1967); soprano, actress, and activist Abbie Mitchell (1884–1960; eventual dedicatee of Bonds’s *Credo*²²); longtime friend, collaborator, and literary icon Langston Hughes (1902–67); friend, mentor, and early teacher Florence B. Price (1887–1953); and playwright, jazz composer, and bandleader Noble Sissle (1889–1975). Recalling (with some obvious exaggeration) that through the many visits to her childhood home she

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“had actual physical contact with all the living composers of African descent,” she went on to characterize Estella Bonds’s cultivation among Black artists in biblical terms:

My mother had a collector’s nose for anything that was artistic, and, a true woman of God, she lived the Sermon on the Mount. Her loaves and fish fed a multitude of pianists, singers, violinists and composers, and those who were not in need of material food came for spiritual food. Under her wings many a musician trusted, and she was my link with the Lord.²³

As we shall see, this upbringing left a deep impression on Margaret Bonds; her letters make clear that her sense of indebtedness to these personalities and their art, and to her own ancestors, gave her a pronounced sense of *Destiny* (her word; uppercase *D* original) that played out in her life and work in countless ways. That need for achievement led to successes already in grade school: she won piano scholarships to Chicago Musical College at ages eight and nine and later scholarships from the Coleridge-Taylor School of Music. Her undergraduate degree at prestigious Northwestern University was made possible by scholarships from the intercollegiate, historically African American sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha and the National Association of Negro Musicians, and at the age of seventeen she achieved the distinction of giving the premiere of Florence Price’s first (E-minor) *Fantasia nègre* at the national meeting of the National Association of Negro Musicians.²⁴ This distinction was to be augmented by her winning the Best Song prize in the national Rodman Wanamaker Competition in Musical Composition for Composers of the Negro Race in 1932, performing what was probably a piano-duet arrangement of Price’s E-minor *Fantasia nègre* as accompaniment to a ballet premiere of that work by Katherine Dunham and the Modern Dancers in December 1932,²⁵ becoming the first Black pianist to perform with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (at the *Century of Progress* World’s Fair on June 15, 1933), and performing the same work with the Woman’s Symphony Orchestra of Chicago on October 12, 1934.²⁶ Her master’s degree was funded by a scholarship from the Julius Rosenwald Foundation. Although Bonds was never shy about expressing her gratitude to Northwestern and was awarded one of the University’s alumni Merit Awards in 1967,

the overwhelming Whiteness of the institution and its curriculum (i.e., its paucity of students and faculty of color and lack of representation of Black figures in its courses) and the harsh racism she faced while there contrasted sharply with her first-hand knowledge of Black achievement – and certainly helped to motivate her lifelong remedial work in this regard. Her remarks on a play put on there in 1937 reflect this conflict,²⁷ but the sharpest indication of the lasting presence of the pain caused by that educational segregation is her description of its contrast with the effect on her of Langston Hughes's poem *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*:

I was in this prejudiced university, this terribly prejudiced place. . . . I was looking in the basement of the Evanston Public Library where they had the poetry. I came in contact with this wonderful poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," and I'm sure it helped my feelings of security. Because in that poem he [Langston Hughes] tells how great the black man is. And if I had any misgivings, which I would have to have – here you are in a setup where the restaurants won't serve you and you're going to college, you're sacrificing, trying to get through school – and I know that poem helped save me.²⁸

Margaret Bonds's understanding of the deep connections between education and racial advocacy resulted in her founding of the Allied Arts Academy in 1938, two years after she and Langston Hughes had befriended one another and one year before she would leave Chicago. The Academy held its opening reception on January 23, 1938, and gave its final concert on June 18, 1939, not long before Bonds relocated to New York. Though not explicitly for Black students, the Academy was located in the Alexander Building at 6407 South Parkway in Chicago's Black Belt and thus intended primarily for Black students. It was a local enterprise but was also announced in the *Detroit Tribune*:

MARGARET A. BONDS, the very talented Chicago Miss who holds several degrees in music and can play the piano like no-body's-business, invited Chicago's fashionables to attend the opening of her new school of dramatics, music and dancing. The name of her studio is the Allied Arts Academy and [it] is located on the second floor of the Alexander Building out South Parkway. . . . Her suite is done in light colors and the piano's done in white. . . . A staff of University trained teachers will carry out the program. . . .

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So on Sunday we siped [sic] tea and listened to a very entertaining and inspiring musical program.²⁹

The Allied Arts Academy lasted only for the duration of Bonds's stay in Chicago, but she reportedly intended to open a New York branch of the enterprise after moving there.³⁰ Despite its short existence, it apparently made an impression. Its penultimate concert, given on April 30, 1939, was noted by the Associated Negro Press and attended by reporters from the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Daily News*, and *Chicago Herald-Examiner*. The *Pittsburgh Courier* ran a sizable story by Etta Moten [Barnett] (1901–2004), a celebrated contralto famously identified with the role of Bess in *Porgy and Bess*, about the concert that reflects the young Margaret Bonds's growing national recognition:

“What becomes of the child prodigies?” Do they make good when put to a real test where constant study is required? These are questions which psychologists have been debating in recent years. Chicago music lovers heard the answer Sunday afternoon, when [the] Allied Arts Academy presented Chicago's own Margaret Bonds in a piano recital at Curtiss Hall of the Fine Arts Building in Chicago's Loop.

Critics from the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Daily News*, [and] *Daily-Examiner*, were there to review the concert of a pianist whom they had heard of only when she played with the Illinois Symphony Orchestra [sic] and the Women's Symphony Orchestra. Many members of old Chicago families were there to hear the daughter of Estella Bonds perform. They were reminiscent of the days when at six years of age, she performed at the Coleridge-Taylor School of Music, of which her mother was co-founder. . . .

Miss Bonds is now president and founder of Allied Arts Academy at 6407 South Parkway. Hers was the fourth concert of this season's concert series. . . . Truly the child prodigy has not only grown up, but has worked every step of the way.³¹

Reportedly at the urging of Langston Hughes, Bonds moved to New York “with \$37 in her pocket” late in 1939 and there “played all sorts of gigs, wrote ensembles, played rehearsal music and did any chief cook and bottle washer job just so [she] could be honest and do what [she] wanted.”³² Soon, however, she was again at work as art and education advocate and social justice activist. By the spring of 1956 she had founded the Margaret Bonds Chamber Music Society, a group of African American performers whose stated purpose was “to perpetuate and inspire a greater public

awareness of the remarkable contributions of Negro composers and poets.”³³ In addition to organizing and giving concerts that would promote the music of Black composers, she served on the board of directors of the Waltann School of Creative Arts in New York. She was an active public speaker: her correspondence and other documents record performances, lecture-recitals, and speeches at the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists, and Scientists, the National Association of Negro Musicians, the New York State Commission against Discrimination, the QUEST Club of New York, the United Negro College Fund, YMCA and YWCA branches, historically Black colleges and universities, and other venues that were centered on poor areas, persecuted groups, and communities of color of all income brackets.³⁴ In 1962 she also gave a brief speech at the Madison (New Jersey) campus of Fairleigh Dickinson University titled “Careers in Music Available to Women” – and the text of this speech, while resolutely avoiding obviously negative perspectives, reveals her awareness of the stymieing sexism of the vocations of music.³⁵ From her 1967 move to Los Angeles to her death, she taught piano lessons and served as music director for the Inner City Institute in that city, also supervising the music for their production of *West Side Story* and composing a new score for a production titled *Burlesque Is Alive*. Her activities demonstrate that social-justice and advocacy groups of many sorts sought (and found) in Margaret Bonds an articulate, engaging, and passionate advocate for their cause.

Equally tellingly, there is a noticeable difference in the programming of Bonds’s own recitals from the 1950s on. The surviving programs and press reports show that her repertoire as a college student consisted almost exclusively of works by male composers, most of them European (J. S. Bach, Debussy, and Robert Schumann figure most prominently, but there are also compositions by Brahms, Dohnanyi, Franck, Milhaud, Mozart, Ravel, Domenico Scarlatti, and Tartini); the only exceptions to this rule were infrequent performances of her own works (the recently published *African Dance* on a text by Hughes, *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*, and “Poème d’automne”³⁶). Beginning in the 1940s and early 1950s, however, her own music and works of other Black composers, most prominently Harry Burleigh,

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Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, and Florence Price, as well as Bonds's arrangements of spirituals, become more prominent. Music by Black composers never predominates except in the relatively few programs with a theme of "the Negro in music," but the programming clearly positions Black composers as coequal peers of canonical White men and fully entitled participants in the musical space, rather than Black incursions into White space.

Most important, though, is that while Langston Hughes, whose work consistently gave frank and often inspiring voice to Black experience, had been the prevalent poet in her vocal oeuvre since 1936, beginning around 1942 Bonds's own compositions became increasingly explicit in their foregrounding and envoicing of texts and poets that deal with Black ideas, Black experience, and Black history. This increase is particularly marked in her published works. During this period she achieves her distinctive approach to arranging spirituals (e.g., the *Creek-Freedmen Spirituals* [New York: Mutual Music, 1946]), and the press release for her 1947 tour reported that she was "busy working on the score and script for a Broadway show which will set something of a precedent in better race relations when it is produced."³⁷ But the completion of the first version of *The Ballad of the Brown King* in 1954 dramatically increased the prevalence of this theme in her compositions. That project set the stage for a series of increasingly ambitious "project[ions of] her own people" (as one caption put it³⁸) that would lead, seemingly inexorably, to *The Montgomery Variations* and Bonds's setting of the W. E. B. Du Bois *Credo*.

Notes

1. Letter from Bonds to Larry Richardson, December 17, 1942, Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Georgetown University Libraries, Margaret Bonds Papers (shelfmark GTM-130530, Box 2, folder 3). Citations to this collection will henceforth be cited as "Georgetown University Bonds Papers," followed by the shelfmark, box number, and folder number.
2. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1903), vii.
3. See David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868–1919* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), 351–52; further, Julia

- E. Liss, "Diasporic Identities: The Science and Politics of Race in the Work of Frans Boas and W. E. B. Du Bois, 1894–1919," *Cultural Anthropology* 13 (1998): 127–66; and Rosemary Levy Zumwalt and William Shedrick Willis, "Franz Boas and W.E.B. Du Bois at Atlanta University, 1906," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 98 (2008): 1–83.
4. This theme would play out in Bonds's and Langston Hughes's cantatas *The Ballad of the Brown King* and *Simon Bore the Cross*; see Chapter 1.
 5. See W. E. B. Du Bois, "The African Roots of the War," in David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995), 642–51.
 6. See Carole Marks, "Black Workers and the Great Migration North," *Phylon* (1960–) 46 (1985): 148–61 at 148.
 7. See Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck, "Rethinking the Role of Racial Violence in the Great Migration," in *Black Exodus: The Great Migration from the American South*, ed. Alferdteen Harrison (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 20–35; Neil R. McMillen, "The Migration and Black Protest in Jim Crow Mississippi," in Harrison, *Black Exodus*, 83–100; Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010); Carol Anderson, "Derailing the Great Migration," in her *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 39–66; and Marcus Anthony Hunter and Zandria F. Robinson, *Chocolate Cities: The Black Map of American Life* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).
 8. Farah Jasmine Griffin, "Who Set You Flowin'?" *The African-American Migration Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 30.
 9. Rae Linda Brown, *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price*, ed. Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020), 99.
 10. Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, & Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 13–15.
 11. Jennifer Dunning, "Talley Beatty, 76, a Leader in Lyrical Jazz Choreography," *New York Times* (May 1, 1995).
 12. Allen Hughes, "Dance: Beatty Company," *New York Times* (March 9, 1964).
 13. See especially Reiland Rabaka, *Against Epistemic Apartheid: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Disciplinary Decadence of Sociology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010); and Rabaka, "'The Damnation of Women': Critique of Patriarchy, Contributions to Black Feminism, and Early

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- Intersectionality,” in his *Du Bois: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021), 95–120.
14. See Alain Locke, “Harlem,” *The Survey Graphic* 53 (1925): 629–30 at 629.
 15. See Ernest Julius Mitchell II, “‘Black Renaissance’: A Brief History of the Concept,” *Amerikastudien/America Studies* 55 (2010): 641–65.
 16. Carolyn C. Denard, “Afterword,” in *The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined: A Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Victor A. Kramer and Robert A. Russ (Troy, NY: The Whitson Publishing Company, 1998), 375–82 at 378.
 17. The following biographical information on Monroe Majors is adapted from W. Montague Cobb, “Monroe Alpheus Majors, 1864–,” *Journal of the National Medical Association* 47, no. 2 (1955): 139–41. The topic of Margaret Bonds’s own Black feminism, briefly discussed in Chapter 3 of this book, is one of the most pressing desiderata of future Bonds research.
 18. M[onroe] A[lpheus] Majors, *Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Activities* (Chicago, IL: Donohue & Henneberry, 1893), x.
 19. Margaret Bonds (Los Angeles) to Larry Richardson (New York), December 17, 1942 (Georgetown University Bonds Papers, shelfmark GTM-130530, Box 2, folder 3). This letter is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1.
 20. The Bonds–Majors separation is reported in Helen Walker-Hill, “Margaret Bonds,” in her *From Spirituals to Symphonies: African-American Women Composers and Their Music* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002), 141–88 at 146. Walker-Hill reports that the couple divorced in 1917, but this is incorrect. The marriage had been annulled “recently” in midsummer 1919 by Judge Charles M. Walker of the Cook County Circuit Court, according to a report of June 21, 1919 in the Chicago newspaper *The Broad Ax* (p. 4), which regularly reported on Estella Bonds’s activities.
 21. The essentials of Bonds’s biography are summarized in Walker-Hill, “Margaret Bonds,” 141–58.
 22. Bonds later recalled that it was from Mitchell that she “learned the importance of the marriage between words and music which is demanded if one is to have a song of any consequence.” See Margaret Bonds, “A Reminiscence,” in *The Negro in Music and Art*, ed. Lindsay Patterson (New York: International Library of Negro Life and History, 1967), 190–93 at 190.
 23. Bonds, “Reminiscence,” 192.
 24. Carl Diton, “Musicians Association to Organize Juniors: Hoosier Elected Head,” *The Pittsburgh Courier* (September 6, 1930): 5.
 25. See Samantha Hannah Oboakorevue Ege, “The Aesthetics of Florence Price: Negotiating the Dissonances of a New World Nationalism” (PhD diss., University of York, 2020), 140–41.

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26. See Rae Linda Brown, *The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price*, ed. Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020), 158–60.
27. See Chapter 1 (pp. 24–26).
28. Margaret Bonds, taped interview with James Hatch, December 28, 1971, quoted from Walker-Hill, *From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 156.
29. Ulysses W. Botken, “Bulletin Board,” *The Detroit Tribune* (January 29, 1938): 6.
30. On November 5, 1939, *The Birmingham News*, describing Bonds as “talented musician, formerly of Chicago, now in New York City,” identified her as “director of Allied Arts Academy, of Chicago” and reported that she “plan[ned] opening a branch in New York City” (*The Birmingham News*, November 5, 1939: 24).
31. Etta Moten, “Margaret Bonds, Pianist, in Concert,” *The Pittsburgh Courier* (May 6, 1939): 8.
32. Christina Demaitre, “She Has a Musical Mission: Developing Racial Harmony; Heritage Motivates Composing Career,” *The Washington Post* 87, no. 253 (August 14, 1964): C2.
33. *The New York Age* (October 20, 1956): 16. The group and its aspirations were introduced in a *New York Age* article titled “Chamber Music Program to Honor H. T. Burleigh” (*New York Age*, October 13, 1956: 21). The Society’s members were Bonds (pianist and director), Naomi Pettigrew (soprano), Ida Johnson (alto), Laurence Watson (tenor), Eugene Brice (baritone), and the Marion Cumbo String Quartette.
34. Many letters, programs, press reports, and other documents pertaining to these activities are preserved in the Margaret Bonds Papers of the Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Georgetown University, Washington, DC (shelfmark GTM 130530).
35. “Music Careers for Femmes Is Topic of Pianist Composer at University,” *Daily Record*, Long Branch, New Jersey (March 22, 1962): 7. The program for this conference (titled *The Executive Woman*) survives in the Langston Hughes (Yale JWG 26, Box 16, folder 377: no. 334). The text of this speech survives in the Georgetown University Bonds Papers (shelfmark GTM 130530 Box 5, folder 7).
36. Margaret Bonds, *African Dance*, ed. John Michael Cooper (Worcester, MA: Hildegard Publishing, 2022); Bonds, *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*, 1936 (New York: W.C. Handy, 1942); Bonds, “Poème d’automne,” 1934, in *Rediscovering Margaret Bonds: Art Songs, Spirituals, Musical Theater and Popular Songs*, ed. Louise Toppin (Ann Arbor, MI: Videmus, 2021), 42–45.
37. “Noted Composer-Pianist to Star in Broadway Show,” *Alabama Tribune, Montgomery, Alabama* (July 18, 1947): 4.
38. Demaitre, “She Has a Musical Mission” (caption to photo of Margaret Bonds).