

May 3, 1977

Mr. Henry Johnson
Vice President for Student Services

Mr. Richard English
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

Mr. William Cash
Assistant to the President

Gentlemen:

Please permit me to use this means of conveying to you (all three of you at once) the request for your assistance and support (particularly in a financial way) of a project which would hopefully heighten the awareness and appreciation of the University community in general and the musical community of the University and the community at large, of the products of Black American art song writers. This project will take the form of a series of four concerts featuring the art song compositions of twelve to sixteen Black American composers. I am just completing a research project which will culminate in the publication of an anthology of art songs of Black American composers by the Edward B. Marks Music Publishing firm of New York City. This publication will be released in August of this year. A portion of the cost to complete this research project to this point has been made available through Rackham Faculty Research funds. The project would be scheduled to have its first concert sometime in the month of October, perhaps in the second week, ending October 15, with the second concert taking place sometime in the first part of the Winter Term; the third concert close to the May Festival season of 1978, hopefully just preceding the May Festival, and the fourth possibly during the Summer ~~Ter~~spring of 1978.

The week of October 15 has been zeroed in on in the projection of beginning this series of concerts as it just so happens that there is a good possibility that Marian Anderson, will be present on our campus during that time as a participant in the ~~East~~ Institute of Workshopology Workshop. I have already been in correspondence with her manager, who assures me that if indeed she is able to fulfill that commitment and accept the invitation, she would certainly be honored to be a participant, at least as a guest, at that first concert. Her presence would of course add considerably to the prestige and importance of this whole series of concerts, particularly since several of the art songs in the publication have been dedicated to her. It would be hoped that it might be possible to have one of the other composers present for the concert at the beginning of the Winter Term, and that composer is projected to be Mr. Robert Owens, who now resides in Munich, West Germany. Mr. Owens is an extremely prolific composer who has set about the project of setting as many of Langston Hughes' poems to art song form music as he

can during his lifetime. To this point he has published well over two hundred of these Langston Hughes poems and settings to music. They are known and highly respected and performed in West Germany and other parts of Europe, but Mr. Owens is relatively or almost completely unknown in the United States. It is hoped also that it might be possible to have for one of the following concerts, the presence of another composer of tremendous ability and recognition around the New York area, namely Mrs. Dorothy Rudd Moore. Mrs. Moore is a composer who, after having done her basic work at Howard University in Washington, D. C., did further study at the Manhattan School of Music and in Paris. She has called considerable attention to herself among composers, having won the Koussevitsky Compositional Prize as well as the Guggenheim Fellowship. She has done a magnificent job of writing art songs that heighten the Black American experience in songs with instrumental accompaniment. Many of her compositions have been premiered at Carnegie Hall in New York City and at other major music centers around the country, but little of her music has been published and made available to the student performers of university age, because it is not in published form. I have included three of Mrs. Moore's songs from one of her cycles in my book, and am in possession of five others of her cycles, totalling well over sixty songs. It is hoped that it might be possible to have Mrs. Moore here on our campus, along with her husband, who is a first class professional cellist playing in various and sundry orchestras in New York and who also has done a good deal of concertizing around the New York area. The hope would be that with the presence of these composers and artists, we would have not only an exposure to the community of their works, but also the availability of these composers and personalities to carry on workshops, either before or after the various concerts that would entertain possibly questions about the compositions, their compositional techniques, and various and sundry other exchanges that would be of immense benefit to our student body and our basic music community.

This project would be handled under the overall management of the Eva Jessye Collection, and would in being so handled also call attention to the on-going worth of this collection and its presence on our campus.

A budget for this project is projected to be roughly four thousand dollars. The bulk of this expense would be to offset the expense of providing transportation and an honorarium to visiting artists, and for the purpose of acquiring additional scores of some of this music which has to this point not been published. The music presented in these concerts would not limit itself to solely that which is in my anthology, but would indeed heighten the other compositions of some of the composers represented in that anthology. As I said before, the basic purpose of this project would be, however, to create an increased awareness of the value of the contributions of these excellent composers to the musical life of the country.

The term "art songs" is here used intentionally to differentiate it from the term "spirituals", which refers specifically, as you all know, to arrangements of Black folk songs. These compositions are all original creations of the composers and in almost all cases involve the setting of an already prepared text to music; in some cases the text having been also written by the composer of the music.

I would hope that serious consideration and positive consideration could be given to this request for our musical and cultural offerings for the coming year.

To this point the University of Michigan has been unable to do anything innovative in this particular area of heightening the Black experience and the contributions of Blacks to the cultural community, particularly in this fashion. Moreover, I don't think anything quite like this has been done in the country to this point. As such, I think it would certainly distinguish the University in a special kind of a way for the support of such a project and of such artists as these.

I would be very happy to have further exchange with any or all of you on the merit of this project and the working out of the details.

Very sincerely,

Willis Patterson
Professor of Music
Chairman, Voice Department

WP:mf

cc: Associate Dean Boylan
Prof. James Standifer