

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 48109

April 11, 1977

Madame Marian Anderson
R.F.D. 1
Danbury, Connecticut 06810

Dear Madame Anderson:

The purpose of my letter is two-fold. The one is in response to the honor done me and invite you to the University of Michigan to participate in a special program being offered by the University of Michigan Institute of Gerontology. It is planning a festival of aging and the art of living during the week of October 8 through 15, 1977. The purpose of the festival is to emphasize the potential of creativity in the achievements of older adults. They would hope to demonstrate that old age can be a time for continued growth and development, as well as for social usefulness.

In connection with this occasion, the Institute plans to present and honor returning alumni in the arts and other older performers and artists. Your name has come up many times during the planning sessions for this festival, since you hold an honorary degree from the University of Michigan. I have been requested to invite you on behalf of the School of Music to participate in that special festival and to receive a Certificate of Achievement for your contributions in the arts. I consider this a singular honor, as I have had the pleasure of meeting you during my years as an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan, but also have had the honor of being the recipient of the Marian Anderson Award for Young Singers in 1957. I was then just finishing my undergraduate work at the University of Michigan, have since had a reasonably modest but very enjoyable career as a performing singer of concert opera and oratorios, and am now back at the University of Michigan School of Music where I serve as chairman of the Voice Department.

The second reason for being happy to respond to the request on the part of the Institute for Gerontology and the School of Music to invite you here is because I am rounding off my plans for the publication of an anthology of art songs of black American composers. This will be published by the Edward B. Marks Publishing Company of New York City and will feature art songs that have been written mainly in the last fifty years. Several of these art songs, particularly one by Mr. Howard Swanson, have been composed in your honor. As you may know, we have no such anthology available

on the market now for aspiring young singers and for teachers of singing, but particularly for young Black singers. It is a sorely needed collection and there is a considerable interest on the part of students and teachers of singing around the country in the availability of this particular anthology. I would love to request that you give some consideration to doing a short written commentary to be included in the preface for this collection, if you would look kindly on the possibility. Mr. George Shirley has consented also to do such a commentary to be included in the preface.

Finally, during the week that you would be here, should it be possible for you to come in response to the Institute of Gerontology program, we would plan to have a concert here at the School of Music honoring you, during which concert art songs of Black American composers would be the featured fare.

I shall attempt to telephone you in regards to this within the next few days, but will hope you have had a chance to read the content of this letter before I call so that you can give me a verbal response possibly over the phone and detailed arrangements can begin to be worked on in anticipation of your honoring us with your presence here at the University of Michigan.

However you are able to respond to these requests, please let me take advantage of this opportunity to extend to you my heartfelt appreciation for all that you have done for me personally and for many thousands of young Black American singers as well as young American singers, and singers of other nationalities around the world. A truly wonderful model of artistry, personal integrity and human warmth is ours because of your wonderful career.

Very sincerely,

Willis Patterson
Chairman, Voice Department

WP:mf