

Saturday Evening, March 2, 2019, at 7:30
Judy and Arthur Zankel Hall

HARRY T. BURLEIGH SOCIETY

presents

Fisk Jubilee Singers Sing Harry T. Burleigh Spirituals

Welcoming Remarks

DR. MARTI SLATEN, *Executive Director and Co-Founder,*
Harry T. Burleigh Society

arr. Moses Hogan I Got a Home
(1957–2003) ALLEN CHRISTIAN, *Bass*

arr. H. T. Burleigh My Lord, what a Mornin’
(1866–1941)

arr. John W. Work III Rock My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham
(1901–1967) SONJIA FRY, *Soprano*

arr. H. T. Burleigh Balm in Gilead

arr. Jester Hairston Elijah Rock
(1901–2000)

arr. Paul T. Kwami Swing Low, Sweet Chariot
(b. 1952) KENNEDI HALL, *Soprano*

adapted, Jeffery Ames Tshotsholoza
(b. 1969) DEONTE WILLIAMS, *Bass*

arr. Hall Johnson Ain’t got Time to Die
(1888–1970) CORTNEY TOWNS, *Soprano*

arr. Gene Bartlett Here’s One
(1918–1988) CHELSEAI CUNNINGHAM, *Alto*

PLEASE SWITCH OFF YOUR CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES.

- arr.* H. T. Burleigh Heav'n, Heav'n
- arr.* Roland Carter In Bright Mansions
(b. 1942)
- arr.* John W. Work III Rockin' Jerusalem
CORTNEY TOWNS, *Soprano*
- arr.* Undine Smith Moore We Shall Walk Through the Valley In Peace
(1904–1989)
DARTISHA MOSELY, *Soprano*
ARIANA OKHUOZAGBON, *Alto*
JEFFREY CASEY, *Tenor*
ALLEN CHRISTIAN, *Bass*
- arr.* Noah Ryder My Lord is so High
(1914–1964)
KENNEDI HALL, *Soprano*
ANDREW DAVIS, *Tenor*

Remarks
LYNNE FOOTE, *President and Co-Founder,*
Harry T. Burleigh Society

- arr.* Hall Johnson His Name So Sweet
MARTI SLATEN, *Soprano*
PAUL T. KWAMI, *Piano*
- arr.* Undine Smith Moore Watch and Pray
MARTI SLATEN, *Soprano*
PAUL T. KWAMI, *Piano*

Intermission

A Portrait Comes to Life

- arr.* Matthew Kennedy Steal Away to Jesus
(1921–2014)
KENNEDI HALL, *Soprano*
- arr.* R. Nathaniel Dett There's a Meeting Here Tonight
(1882–1943)
SONJIA FRY, *Soprano*
- arr.* John W. Work III Rise, Shine for Thy Light is A-comin'
CORTNEY TOWNS, *Soprano*
- Traditional Spiritual The Gospel Train
ALLEN CHRISTIAN, *Bass*

- arr.* Paul T. Kwami Down by the Riverside
DARTISHA MOSLEY, *Soprano*
- arr.* John W. Work III There's a Great Camp Meeting
CORTNEY TOWNS, *Soprano*
- arr.* Paul T. Kwami Wade in the Water
CHELSEAI CUNNINGHAM, *Alto*
- arr.* Williams H. Smith Ride the Chariot
(1908–1944) CORTNEY TOWNS, *Soprano*

Notes ON THE PROGRAM

“We finally grew willing to sing them privately...we practiced softly, learning from each other the songs of our fathers. We did not dream of ever using them in public. It was only after many months that gradually our hearts were opened...we began to appreciate the wonderful beauty and power of our songs.”

— Ella Sheppard Moore, 1911

“...for through all these songs, there breathes a hope, a faith in the ultimate justice and brotherhood of man. The cadences of sorrow invariably turn to joy, and the message is ever manifest that eventually deliverance from all that hinders and oppresses the soul will come, and man—every man—will be free.”

— Harry T. Burleigh, 1917

Tonight’s concert foregrounds Ella Sheppard and Harry T. Burleigh as leaders of a genre: the concert spiritual.

Spirituals—sacred, protest songs encompassing nuanced theology expressing Christian declamation, coded messages about freedom and survival through racist oppression, and beauty of musical form—are at the foundation of American music. Enslaved Africans in the U.S. created them during the 18th and 19th centuries as a folk music. It was the leadership of Ella Sheppard and the original Fisk Jubilee Singers that transformed the folk spiritual into the concert spiritual during their 1871 tour. Other composers and choral ensembles, especially those at historically black colleges and universities, followed the model of the Fisk Jubilee Singers concert spiritual singing in their own performances. In this legacy Harry T. Burleigh professionalized the concert spiritual genre with his solo voice-piano publications of 13 spirituals, including his popular “Deep River” in 1916–1917, expanding the repertoire beyond choral ensemble arrangements. Critically acclaimed solo classical singers, of all nationalities and races, subsequently performed Mr. Burleigh’s concert spirituals in recitals and

recordings. Moreover, in religious worship, especially among Christian and Jewish congregations, concert spirituals have been an expression of hope for liberation, a portal to honor and commemorate freedom journeys, and a source of strength through the trials of injustice.

Ella Sheppard and her Fisk University classmates, many who were formerly enslaved, sang spirituals with each other during private moments of their college life. When she utilized her lifelong keyboard training to transcribe and arrange spirituals for performance on stage, she enacted singular courage. Ms. Sheppard simultaneously led the emergence of an entire genre and disrupted norms of the definition of a western composer. Her black female student subjectivity was in stark contrast to lauded Romantic Era composers of western art music and undermined her credits as a composer. Nevertheless, Ms. Sheppard, encouraged by Fisk professor and trustee George L. White, not only arranged for, but also coached and directed the ensemble. The style of her arrangements utilizing hushed, *bel canto* vocal aesthetics, four-part harmony, and written transmission in music scores contributed to the western choral music tradition.

On October 6, 1871, along with her fellow original Fisk Jubilee Singers, she left Nashville following routes of the Underground Railroad, and subsequently throughout Europe on a tour to raise money for the university. The ensemble's singing of concert spirituals paralleled other firsts. They were the first known non-blackface black performers on American stages, they were the first American choir—of any race—to tour Europe, and the profits of their tours were used to erect the first permanent structure in the U.S. south for the higher education of African Americans: Jubilee Hall. Queen Victoria, in awe and admiration of their 1873 performance in London, commissioned a portrait of the ensemble by her court painter, Edmund Havel. The 1873 Havel portrait, which hangs at Fisk University in Jubilee Hall today, is the only known life-size portrait of African Americans from the 19th century. Featured tonight both by image and by embodied performance, the Havel portrait invites the audience to consider the robust, enduring contribution of the Fisk Jubilee Singers to American culture, and their commands for freedom. At a time when they were prohibited from freely entering public spaces by Jim Crow laws and customs, they sang with dignity, virtuosity, and grace.

Inspired by Ms. Sheppard's work, Harry T. Burleigh expanded upon the international popularity of choral concert spiritual singing by publishing his arrangements of solo voice concert spirituals as well as choral arrangements of concert spirituals. He was a leader among 20th century composers who carried forward the tradition in contemporary arrangements, like those by Moses Hogan heard tonight. Mr. Burleigh's arrangements remained in constant use and were revered by performers for their vocal challenges and

musical clarity. The Burleigh Society invites the audience to listen with ears of Burleigh's moment by remembering that he published when blackface minstrelsy was at a height, and during the popular rise of ragtime, blues, and musical theater. One can hear how his arrangements are unique among the work of his close friends, Bert Williams, Will Marion Cook, James Reese Europe, and W.C. Handy, while sharing black music idioms. Before the Harlem Renaissance, Mr. Burleigh claimed the arts as a radical pathway for African Americans to assert citizenship rights, to shape the culture of the country, and to rightfully claim place in the history of building America.

Over the course of the 20th and into the 21st centuries, the concert spiritual tradition that Ms. Sheppard and Mr. Burleigh led bloomed into the rich repertoire that this concert presents. The development and diversity of concert spiritual styles—ranging from arrangements by directors of the Fisk Jubilee Singers including John W. Work III, Matthew Kennedy, and Paul T. Kwami, grew into the distinct concert spirituals arranged by later composers Hall Johnson, Jester Hairston, and Roland Carter.

Before intermission, soprano Marti Slaten will perform two solo pieces in honor of soprano Ella Sheppard's unwavering faith in Jesus Christ. In underrepresented black female classical composer Undine Smith Moore's arrangement of "Watch and Pray," one hears about a devastating part of Ella Sheppard's life: when she and her mother were forcibly separated during enslavement on a Tennessee plantation. By the grace of God, Ms. Sheppard was able to bring her mother, as a free woman, to live with her at the end of her life.

The second half of the program brings the second troupe of the Fisk Jubilee Singers

and the current ensemble into contradistinction. With a representation of 1873 Havel portrait in view and with the current Singers representing the 1873 ensemble, the audience will reckon with the connections between the dedication to a mission of that 19th century moment, and the education about—and preservation of—a legacy into the current Black Lives Matter era. In “A Portrait Comes to Life,” the Fisk Jubilee Singers will sing in the style of those arranged by Ella Sheppard and harken to the emergence of the genre’s style. The Singers’ Victorian costume, deportment, and musical virtuosity exemplify their reach across art mediums—music, oration, fashion, and visual art.

The concert spiritual is a genre that has paradigmatic influence in how it vocalizes African American experience, sacred

worship and faith, political savvy, and artful expression. Singing concert spirituals has pushed listeners to navigate through the pitfalls of oppression. Among a generation of newly colonized South Africans, for example, hearing the resistance and hope of formerly enslaved Americans through concert spiritual singing was politically potent. In response many young 19th century South Africans sought out education at black colleges and universities in the U.S. and then returned to author their country’s constitutional law. In light of this power to transform and sustain hope, it is the mission of the Harry T. Burleigh Society to ensure that the work of historic black art musicians like Ella Sheppard and Harry T. Burleigh is never forgotten—and that the concert spiritual tradition continues to bring out the best of human expression.

UPCOMING EVENT

Join The Harry T. Burleigh Society for “From Song Came Symphony” on Wednesday, May 8, 2019 at 7:30pm at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. In their second collaboration with the Urban Playground Chamber Orchestra, the Burleigh Society will showcase the symphonic influence of Harry T. Burleigh, featuring violinist Kelly Hall-Tompkins and lecturer A. Kori Hill. Increasingly credited as influencing some of

the spiritual-inspired thematic material for the *New World Symphony* and American String Quartet of Dvořák, Burleigh’s work also influenced other composers of the 20th century. The program includes William Grant Still’s “And They Lynched Him on a Tree,” spirituals by William Levi Dawson and Burleigh, as well as the New York City premiere of Florence Price’s Violin Concerto 2. For more details, visit www.burleighsociety.com

THE Artists

HARRY T. BURLEIGH (1866-1949), *Baritone and Composer*

Mr. Burleigh came to New York City from his hometown of Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1892 to study performance at the National Conservatory of Music, founded by Jeannette Thurber. Later that year Czech composer Antonin Dvořák became director of the Conservatory and developed a collaborative relationship with the 26-year-old student. Through his regularly singing of spirituals to Mr. Dvořák, Mr. Burleigh profoundly influenced the composer's reference to African American music idioms in his Symphony No. 9 in E minor, *From the New World* (1893). This presaged a momentous shift in the trajectory of American music by proposing the value of its own folk music for composition. The further reverberation in musical theatre, ragtime, blues, jazz, and black entertainment, writ large, is well documented and places Mr. Burleigh at the vanguard of shaping the identity of American music.

Mr. Burleigh's own performance and composition career was grounded in western art music and was significantly shaped by his commitment to singing and composing African American music in church and concert music. He published over 250 songs, instrumental music, and edited a volume of hymns. His baritone voice was known to powerfully resound through any space in which he performed. Through both his role as a charter member of ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) in 1914, and his music editorship at G. Ricordi Music of Milan (1913), he championed legal rights of composers to the



economic rewards from performance and publishing of their work, thereby making viable the careers of generations of black music makers.

He was the baritone soloist at St. George's Episcopal Church for fifty-two years, and sang in the choir at Temple Emanu-El for 25 years. From these platforms, both of which he desegregated, he could perform, mentor, teach, and also advocate for the preservation and compositional source of the spirituals. Indeed, the respect Mr. Burleigh earned as vocalist and composer enabled singers from Roland Hayes, Paul Robeson, and Marian Anderson, to composers Florence Price, Margaret Bond, R. Nathaniel Dett, William Grant Still, and William L. Dawson to engage with African American art music in radically new and innovative ways. His musical impact and his social courage continue to be a model for, what historian Vincent Harding called, "artisans of democracy" in America and beyond.

LYNNE FOOTE, *President and Co-Founder, Harry T. Burleigh Society*



Initially hearing about Harry T. Burleigh while attending St. George's Church, where he was the baritone soloist from 1894 to 1946, it was not until Ms. Foote was enrolled in Dr. Slaten's 2015 course at Columbia, "Music Humanities," that all the connections she and Mr. Burleigh shared became apparent. In addition to St. George's, her Catskill Mountains' home in Onteora Park is the summer community founded by Jeannette Thurber, her husband, Francis, and her sister-in-law, Candace Wheeler. Jeanette Thurber also had founded the National Conservatory of Music, where Mr. Burleigh was a student from 1892–1894. Through Dr. Slaten's class, Mr. Burleigh's importance to American music and history kindled Ms. Foote's desire to pursue graduate work on him. After gradu-

ating from the American studies program at Columbia University in 2016, Ms. Foote pursued a master's degree in U.S. history at University of Oxford, graduating in 2017. Her master's thesis, "Deep River: The Negro Spiritual and Black Intellectual Thought, 1900–1930," put Mr. Burleigh, W.E.B. Du Bois, and James Weldon Johnson in conversation about the spiritual and black cultural production. Ms. Foote now continues her Burleigh studies in the Ph.D. program in Oxford's History Faculty. Her project proposes that his career, while firmly situated in Jim Crow New York, challenges perceived boundaries between national and international identities, sacred and popular music, racialized and gendered collaborative space, and it also situates his singular contribution simultaneously within Western art music as well as within the long arc of African American musical heritage across four centuries and into today. Ms. Foote is interested in the intersection of race—including whiteness—with 19th and early 20th century American intellectual, cultural, political, gender, and urban history. She considers it a privilege and joy to have co-founded the Harry T. Burleigh Society in 2017 with her friend and mentor, Dr. Marti Slaten, and make Mr. Burleigh's music sing out in new spaces and introduce new people to the transcendent and radical beauty of his life and work.

PAUL T. KWAMI, DMA, *Musical Director of the Fisk Jubilee Singers*

Dr. Kwami was born in Ghana, West Africa as one of seven children. His father, a musician, taught him piano, violin, theory, and conducting. He studied music at Ghana's National Academy of Music and taught there until immigrating to the U.S. in 1983 as a student at Fisk University. He promptly joined the Fisk Jubilee Singers. After graduating Fisk in 1985 he continued to study music at Western Michigan University and graduated in 1987 with a master of music degree. In spring of 1994 he was solicited to serve as part-time director of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. In the fall of the same year he was promoted to full time faculty member in the music department and became the musical director of the ensemble. He is the first African to direct the ensemble and the first director named the Curb-Beaman Chair of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. He is currently the Mike Curb Jubilee Singers Endowed Chair. Dr. Kwami received the doctor of musical arts (D.M.A.) degree in conducting from the American Conservatory of Music. Dr. Kwami—a composer, an arranger and conductor—is an associate professor of music at Fisk University. During his years of service as musical director, the Fisk Jubilee Singers have received several awards



including a Dove Award, two Grammy nominations, the Recording Academy Honors, the 2008 National Medal of the Arts, induction into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame, Music City Walk of Fame, the Grammy Hall of Fame, and Academy of Country Music membership. He is the executive producer of the Fisk Jubilee Singers' recording entitled *Rise, Shine, Fisk Jubilee Singers Live in Concert* and co-executive producer of *In Bright Mansions*. He has also been featured in several documentaries related to the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Dr. Kwami enjoys teaching and travels around the country conducting choral music workshops and master classes.

ELLA SHEPPARD (1851-1914), *Soprano, Keyboardist, and Composer*



Samuella “Ella” Sheppard was born in Nashville, Tennessee to devoted parents Simon and Sarah Sheppard. The family endured the horrors of enslavement, including her father’s work in strategizing and successfully purchasing his own freedom and that of Ms. Sheppard’s. They also endured the order and sale of Ms. Sheppard’s mother to a plantation in Mississippi. Seeking possibility, Ella Sheppard and her father moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1856 where she studied piano within the African American and German music pedagogies that thrived in the city. When her father died in 1866, Sheppard supported her family through music performances. She subsequently moved back to Nashville and enrolled at Fisk University in 1868.

At Fisk, Ms. Sheppard’s work as a singer, keyboardist, composer, and teacher thrived. She arranged the first settings of concert spirituals for the Fisk Jubilee Singers’ groundbreaking international tours in the 1870s. She was the second director of the ensemble and became the first black staff member of the university in 1875. Her singing “could hold her audience spellbound” and her virtuosity as a keyboardist, on both piano and organ, was groundwork for her gifts as a composer.

Ms. Sheppard’s concertizing of spirituals was but one front of her transformative influence. She was a steadfast support to her husband Rev. George Washington Moore of the American Missionary Association. Ms. Sheppard was also a confidant of Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington. She is buried in Nashville’s Old City Cemetery, where the Fisk Jubilee Singers sing the spiritual “Steal Away” in her memory at her grave each year. The Burleigh Society claims Ms. Sheppard as a composer, despite the obscurity of her scores. She was tireless in battling the daily oppression of racist acts and remains an icon for commanding musical excellence and the liberation of black people through a Christian life.

MARTI SLATEN, PH.D., *Soprano, Executive Director and Co-Founder, Harry T. Burleigh Society*

Dr. Slaten's work on the expressive culture of African American art music intersects performance and institutionalality. Compelled by the endless beauty and lessons of concert spirituals, her artistry as a classical singer and her vision for vibrant black art music culture informs her commitment to The Burleigh Society. Her partnership with Society co-founder Lynne Foote enacts her conviction about the gifts of collaborative institutional execution. Dr. Slaten is proud to be a leader whose strengths in founding organizations leads to their longevity. Her experience co-founding the Oberlin Conservatory Black Musicians' Guild (2001) and the New York City Mellon Fellows' Writing Retreats (2012), are examples of organizations that have been continuously active since their founding. She is a Ford Foundation Fellow and is a frequent lecture-recitalist, having offered programs at Brooklyn College, Bryn Mawr, Columbia, Reed, and St. Olaf. Dr. Slaten has performed in operas, recitals and oratorios throughout the United States and Europe. A chorister in New York City Opera's production of *Anna Nicole* and the Opera Orchestra of New York's *Roberto Devereux*, she has also been a guest soloist with the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Opera Noire of New York, and Harlem Opera Theater. She is a charter member of Melodeon, the chamber ensemble founded by Artis Wodehouse. In music theater, Slaten has performed Glenda (*The Wiz*)



and Mama Euralie (*Once on This Island*). She is a choral adjudicator and clinician for WorldStrides Heritage Festivals, where she has encouraged over five hundred choirs and choral conductors from throughout North America to remain accountable to the cultural context of their repertoire when performing. Dr. Slaten holds degrees in music and African American studies from Oberlin College (B.A.), Oberlin Conservatory of Music (B.M.), and Columbia University (M.A., M.A., Ph.D.). Dr. Slaten continues to draw from her musical foundation: singing in choirs of the First Baptist Church of Cumminsville, New Jerusalem Baptist Church, the University of Cincinnati CCM Children's Choir, and the Cincinnati May Festival Youth Chorus. Her husband Whitney and her son Wesley are her most important audience.

HARRY T. BURLEIGH SOCIETY

Founded on the 150th anniversary of Mr. Burleigh's birth in 2017, the Harry T. Burleigh Society is a non-profit organization that advances black art music through scholarship and performance. This weekend's concert and conference mark the third of the Society's annual March events. In 2017 the Society produced a tribute to Mr. Burleigh's Annual Vespers Service of Negro Spirituals at St. George's Church. In 2018 in collaboration with the Urban Playground Chamber Orchestra, the Society produced a concert themed on the generative friendship Mr. Burleigh and Black British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. Throughout his life African American baritone and composer

Harry T. Burleigh disrupted segregated boundaries and challenged social norms. In composition, performance, religious worship, and publishing, Mr. Burleigh made historic, international interventions between and within each of these spheres during his career. Grounded in African American history and culture, and committed to social justice, the Society consciously shapes arenas where interracial, creative, interreligious, international, and intergenerational encounters thrive—all fortified by beauty, seriousness, and compensation that follow Mr. Burleigh's model and raise awareness about the broad swath of his impact.

FISK JUBILEE SINGERS



Fisk Jubilee Singers are vocal artists and students at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, who sing and travel worldwide. The original ensemble introduced the Negro spiritual to the world in 1871 as they traveled and raised money to sustain Fisk University. The ensemble was also instrumental in preserving this unique American music. During their early years of travel and performance, they sang for crowned heads around the world. The Fisk Jubilee Singers continue the tradition of singing the Negro spiritual around the world, and recently performed in renowned venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Smithsonian Institute, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, the White House, and Nashville's Ryman Auditorium.

In 2007 the ensemble also traveled and performed in Ghana at the invitation of the Department of State in celebration of Ghana's 50th Independence anniversary. The two-time Grammy-nominated and Dove Award-winning Fisk Jubilee Singers have received numerous awards including the induction into the Music City Walk of Fame, the Gospel Music Hall of Fame, and the Grammy Hall of Fame. In 2008 the Fisk Jubilee Singers were awarded the National Medal of Arts by President George W. Bush at the White House. The ensemble, which has collaborated with guest artists like CeCe Winans, Keb' Mo', Shania Twain, India.Arie, The Fairfield Four, and Rodney Atkins, now has membership in the Academy of Country Music.

2018–2019 FISK JUBILEE SINGERS

Paul T. Kwami '85 D.M.A.

Associate Professor of Music

Musical Director of the Fisk Jubilee Singers

Mike Curb Jubilee Singers Endowed Chair

SOPRANO

*Kennedi Hall '21 Wilmington, DE. Music Performance.

Dartisha Mosley '20 Aurora, IL. Music Performance and English.

Courtney Towns '21 St. Louis, MO. Music Performance.

Sonjia Fry '19 Detroit, MI. Business Management.

ALTO

*Chelseai Cunningham '20 Memphis, TN. Music Performance.

Genesis James '19 Montgomery, AL. Biology.

Kristen Oguno '21 Nashville, TN. Biochemistry.

Ariana Okhuozagbon '21 Houston, TX. Biology.

TENOR

*Andrew Davis '20 Durham, NC. Music Education.

William Collins '22 Dayton, OH. Political Science and Music Performance.

Kemani Iwu '22 Nashville, TN. Accounting.

Jeffrey Casey '22 Nashville, TN. Business Administration.

BASS

*Allen Christian '19 Nashville, TN. Music Education.

Tory Westbrook '22 Glastonbury, CT. Music Education.

Anthony Kennedy '20 Nashville, TN. Accounting.

Deonte Williams '19 Macon, GA. History.

*Section Leader

HARRY T. BURLEIGH SOCIETY STAFF

Carmel Bendit-Shtull, *Event Manager*

A. Kori Hill, *Director of Social Media*

CREDITS

Edmund Havell Jr., *Portrait of the Jubilee Singers*, 1873. Photo: Jerry Atnip.

The Harry T. Burleigh Society wishes to acknowledge and thank all those that have extended their generosity to make tonight's concert a success. They include:

The Harry T. Burleigh Family
The Ella Sheppard Family
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Mr. Lynwood Berry
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Sara Beth Turner Photography
Shake Shack
BCake
Sylvia's Restaurant
Eric K. Washington

On behalf of all of us, we salute you for giving us the means to carry out our mission to advance Burleigh studies through scholarship and performance.