

MARIAN ANDERSON MANUSCRIPTS

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INTRODUCTION

Marian Anderson (1897-1993) was a Philly-born, American contralto who, in spite of racial barriers, had an enormously successful career singing opera and spirituals in the United States and abroad. The entire un-digitized collection of her music manuscripts (Ms. Coll. 199) resides in the University of Pennsylvania's Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books, and Manuscripts. The collection includes hundreds of original compositions by her adoring fans, many of which were sent to her with a personal letter (found in Ms. Coll. 200).



GOALS

1. Gain a better understanding of the group of women whose music belonged to Marian Anderson by collecting broad data about them and their compositions. Organize the data so that it might be useful for future researchers.
2. As a personal project, use the data to research in-depth the Black women composers whose compositions are part of the collection.

STEPS

1. I examined each of the 2,015 manuscripts in the *Manuscript Collection 199: Marian Anderson Manuscripts*, recording information like genre, language, and publication date.
2. I examined the correspondence by the women who sent letters to Marian Anderson with their compositions in the *Manuscript Collection 200: Marian Anderson Papers, 1897-1993*, noting among other things a brief summary of the contents of the correspondence.
3. Using the information from steps 1 and 2, I performed genealogical research on the composers using ancestry.com, ProQuest, and other databases. I recorded personal information like birth and death information, race, and occupation.
4. I wrote profiles of each of the 22 Black woman composers using notes from the manuscript collections and additional academic materials.

FINDINGS

Out of the 2,015 manuscripts in Anderson's collection, 685 were definitely written by women, according to the naming norms for gender at the time. Most of the compositions were concert pieces written in English, but there were also many spirituals and arrangements of spirituals written in Dialect. Of the 93 women whose race I could determine, 71 were white and 22 were Black.

The women I profiled:



Mabel M. Berry



Lina M. Blanchet



Margaret Bonds



Lillian Evanti



Alberta Grant



Thomasina Greene



Betty Jackson King



Camille Nickerson



Florence Price



Amanda C. Elizabeth



Florence Talbert

Not Pictured: Albertine Gemon, Willie B. Grant, Letitia Harris, Edna R. Heard, Paralee Holmes, Ellen Lumio, Olietta Moore, Edna H. Porter, Lottie Robinson, Blanche Thomas, Effie Tyus.

LOOKING FORWARD

In this project, I created three spreadsheets: one containing metadata about each of the relevant manuscripts, one containing information about Anderson's correspondence with relevant individuals, and one containing biographical data about each composer. The manuscripts in the Anderson collection came from a very diverse group of women. While many were professional musicians or music educators, many had no formal musical training at all. An interesting continuation of this project would be to use the spreadsheets I created as a starting point in order to research the women in terms of categories other than race—for example, social class—and look for patterns.