Black composers have contributed exceptional works to the canon of classical piano literature. Over the span of my career as a pianist and pedagogue, I have researched, performed and shared these often-unknown gems with students, colleagues and audiences. Pieces for all skill levels are shared here, thus providing excellent options to diversify one’s repertoire at any level. Learning and teaching these pieces will heighten students’ awareness of other cultures, styles and techniques.

For me, it has been inspirational to discover these works. Knowing that my ancestors and contemporaries have composed such quality music has allowed me to connect on a deeper level to my craft.

What a joy it was for me to discover:

- Florence Price—the first female Black composer to achieve national recognition
- Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges—the first known composer of African descent
- George Walker—a Pulitzer-prize winning composer
- Samuel Coleridge-Taylor—an African-British composer.
- Black women composers including Margaret Bonds, Regina Baiocchi, Betty Jackson King, Eleanor Alberga, Valerie Capers, Marian Harrison and Zenobia Powell Perry
- Contemporary composers—Bruce Russell, David Bontemps, Quinn Mason, Carlos Simon, Roger Dickerson

For specific forms, I recommend the following composers:

- **Sonatas:** Florence Price, Brian Nabors, George Walker, Gerard Aymonche, David Bontemps, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, David Baker
- **Études:** H. Leslie Adams, Fred Onovwerosuoke, Roberto Valera, Florence Price
- **20th Century:** Tania Leon, Anthony Green, Adolphus Hailstork, James Lee, III
- **Theme and Variations:** Trevor Weston, David Bontemps

Thank you for your interest in this music. To listen to some recordings, search “Dr. Aaron Mathews’ Piano Studio” on YouTube, and you will see the playlists that I have compiled. Further, I am happy to supply an accompanying handout, which provides a more extensive list of Black composers and their works, while also sharing information on how to locate and purchase the works.
Let it Shine!

Piano Music by Black Composers

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ABSTRACT

Black composers have contributed exceptional works to classical piano literature. This poster highlights some of the most significant repertoire that is available.

This repertoire will:
1. Engage performers and audiences
2. Enhance and develop essential piano skills
3. Contribute to one’s general edification
4. Heighten awareness of other cultures, styles, and piano techniques.

INTRODUCTION

Piano music by Black composers provides options beyond the traditional canon of classical piano repertoire. I encourage you to consider these works as new options for you and your students.

Selections included in this presentation are limited to the following criteria:
- Solo piano literature
- Primarily classical repertoire
- Available for purchase / download
- Favorites of mine and my students

LIVING COMPOSERS

- Regina Baiocchi
- Quinn Mason
- Jeremy Ajani Jordan
- Godwin Sadoh
- Fred Onovwerosuoke

SELECTED REPERTOIRE

ELEMENTARY PIECES

- Florence Price
  * Beginning Pieces, Vols. 1 and 2
  * black keys, 5 finger positions, imitation, hand shifts, 8th notes
- William Grant Still
  * Piano Works for Children
- Margaret Bonds
  * Childhood Dreams (10 pieces)
  * based on songs from African countries
- Betty Jackson King
  * Vignette No. 2
- Neeki Bey
  * Piano Accents: Africa (10 pieces)

INTERMEDIATE PIECES

- William Grant Still
  * Piano Works for Children
- Valerie Capers
  * Portraits in Jazz – 12 studies; must-buy
- R. Nathaniel Dett
  * From the Southland – 6 pieces; folk melodies; lyrical; lush chords
- Saint-Georges
  * Adagio in F Minor – classical gem
- Hale Smith
  * Faces of Jazz - 12 studies
- Poe
  * Piano Etude #4
- Jeremy Ajani Jordan
  * Children’s Songs: Nocturne, Mazurka, and Scherzo
- Quinn Mason
  * New Era Bagatelles
  * Piano Suite ‘Homage a Lola’
- John W. Work, III
  * Scuppernong
- Betty Jackson King
  * Mephisto Masque
- R. Nathaniel Dett
  * Magnolia; In the Bottoms
- William Grant Still
  * Three Visions
  * A Deserted Plantation
- George Walker
  * Sonatas Nos. 1-4
  * Prelude and Caprice
- Edmund Dede
  * Mephisto Masque
- H. Leslie Adams
  * 26 Etudes for Solo Piano
- Brian Raphael Nabors
  * Piano Sonata
- David Bontemps
  * Gede Nibo (12 Variations)
- David Baker
  * Jazz Dance Suite

FINAL THOUGHTS

Thank you for your time and interest in piano music by Black composers. This is not an exhaustive list. It merely gives a glimpse into the wonderful music that has been created.

REFERENCES

- Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College Chicago
- www.africlassical.com
- Keyboard Music of Black Composers: A Bibliography
- Composers websites: H. Leslie Adams, Regina Baiocchi, Everett Jones, Quinn Mason, Jeremy Ajani Jordan
- Scores available through: IMSLP, Amazon, Sheet Music Plus, ClassicalOnDemand.com, Theodore Front Music

FOR RECORDINGS:

Search “Dr. Aaron Mathews’ Piano Studio” on YouTube for an extensive playlist.