

2024 Music Teachers National Association Conference, Atlanta, Georgia
Embracing Diversity and Belonging in the Music Teaching Studio: Repertoire and Beyond

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I. Diversity and Belonging

A. Defined

1. Nuances
2. Acknowledgment and Following up

B. Language changes and Scenarios

II. In the Teaching Studio

- ▶ Introductions at every class. "Something random..."
- ▶ Have rules for engaging technology (include or turn off?), space, seating, scores, etc.
- ▶ Step back and listen
- ▶ Moderator: Keep track of who leads the conversation after every performance
- ▶ Have follow up one-on-one with students who performed.
- ▶ For new student attendees, informal feedback is also valuable.

III. Studio Classes

- ▶ Regular check-ins, feedback
- ▶ Repertoire options: Programming as storytelling
- ▶ Options during the learning process
- ▶ Long journey from 'slow' to 'in tempo'
- ▶ Movement with Purpose
- ▶ Practicing as a journey

IV. Summary

PROGRAM
Saturday, March 16, 2024

AMANDA ALDRIDGE
(1866-1956)

Four Moorish Pictures: An Eastern Suite

Prayer Before Battle
Dance of the Slave Girls
Twilight Dance
Dance of Triumph

PROGRAM NOTES:

Reprint of Excerpts from “Bach to Black: Suites for Piano, Volume III” Liner notes¹:

“British composer, teacher, and singer Montague Ring was born in Norwood, London as Amanda Ira Aldridge. She studied at the Royal College of Music from 1875 to 1877. Her father, Ira, was a prominent Shakespearean actor and was the first African American to play the role of Othello. She had a very successful performing career as a singer until she began to battle a case of laryngitis. In addition, she was a vocal coach to many renowned singers, such as Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson. Aldridge has primarily composed works for piano, including seven suites, and several works for voice. Her works were published using her chosen pseudonym, Montague Ring.

At the time of this writing, original editions of the score for this suite can be found at the British Library in London, England and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City. The first movement of *Four Moorish Pictures*, “Prayer Before Battle,” is in D Minor. The opening moderato tempo reflects the prayer-like section, and the “battle” happens after the first phrase. Alternation between the “prayer” and “battle” continues in the movement with contrasting tempi. The final “Grandioso” section leads to a bold conclusion.

The title of the second movement, “Dance of the Slave Girls,” is where I wish to provide a bit more context. To modern eyes, this title can be deemed offensive. All titles used in this suite seem to stem from Aldridge’s own interest in Pan-Africanism. She was an activist like her father who had ties to this growing movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. With the exception of her piece, *Carnival: Suite of Five Dances*, Aldridge’s six other piano suites utilizes titles alluding to cultural influences from Africa or former British territories. For example: *T’chaka; An African Suite*, was also composed in 1927, and was inspired by T’chaka, or Shaka Zulu, an African warrior of the 19th century. Pan-Africanism leaders sought to bring more awareness of Africa’s history and civil rights of Black people, and they aimed to highlight concerns with colonialism of Africa during this time. W.E.B. DuBois, noted 20th century historian, author of *The Souls of Black Folk*, and Pan-African activist, invited Aldridge to attend the 1923 Pan-African Congress, though she declined in order to take care of her ailing sister.² Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, another British Black composer, also had regular ties to this movement.³ Ultimately, these difficult historical events are complex which involve both racial

¹ Sennet, Rochelle. *Bach to Black: Suites for Piano: Volume III*. Liner Notes. Albany Records, 2024.

² Ring, Montague. Letter from Amanda Ira Aldridge to W. E. B. Du Bois, October 4, 1923. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

³ Fryer, Peter. Ch. 9, “Challenges to Empire.” In *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*. London: Pluto Press, 1984, reprint 2018. Pp. 241-302.

and territorial implications, and language usage changes over time. The next movement, "Twilight Dance," is in F Minor with a rhythmic ostinato in the left hand throughout. With its short phrases and double thirds and sixths, it is reminiscent of a somber version of a "Barcarolle," or "boat song," in 3/4 time. The frequent use of the augmented second in the right-hand melody creates a unique sound. In the final movement, "Dance of Triumph," Aldridge continues with ostinato rhythmic patterns in the left hand, suggesting influence from a march."

SELECT ADDITIONAL REFERENCE

Floyd, Samuel. *International Dictionary of Black Composers*. In Two volumes. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1999.

MUSICAL SCORE

Ring, Montague. *Four Moorish Pictures: An Eastern Suite*. London: Ascherberg, Hopwood and Crew LTD, 1927.

MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Montague Ring: *Four Moorish Pictures: An Eastern Suite*. I. Prayer Before Battle, mm. 1-11.

Moderato

PIANO

mf

Più mosso

mp

Montague Ring: *Four Moorish Pictures: An Eastern Suite*. II. Dance of the Slave Girls, mm. 1-10.

Allegretto

PIANO *mp*

The first system of the musical score for 'Dance of the Slave Girls' is written for piano. It features a treble and bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' and the dynamic is 'mp'. The melody in the treble clef begins with a quarter rest, followed by eighth and quarter notes. The bass clef accompaniment consists of chords and single notes.

The second system of the musical score continues the piece. The treble clef features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, while the bass clef provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and eighth notes.

Montague Ring: *Four Moorish Pictures: An Eastern Suite*. III. Twilight Dance, mm. 1-8.

Andante con moto (*Dreamily*)

PIANO *p*

The first system of the musical score for 'Twilight Dance' is written for piano. It features a treble and bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Andante con moto (Dreamily)' and the dynamic is 'p'. The treble clef contains chords and a melodic line, while the bass clef has a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

The second system of the musical score continues the piece. The treble clef features a melodic line with a long slur over several measures, while the bass clef continues with its eighth-note accompaniment.

Montague Ring: *Four Moorish Pictures: An Eastern Suite*. IV. Triumphant Dance, mm. 1-6.

Moderato Pomposo

PIANO

f

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and contains a series of eighth-note chords and melodic fragments. The lower staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, featuring a steady eighth-note bass line.

stacc.

The second system continues the piece. The upper staff features a series of chords with a staccato (*stacc.*) marking. The lower staff continues with its eighth-note bass line. The system concludes with a melodic flourish in the upper staff marked with an accent (>).

The third system of musical notation shows the continuation of the piece. The upper staff features chords with some melodic movement, including a phrase with an accent (>). The lower staff maintains the eighth-note bass line. The system ends with another accented melodic flourish in the upper staff.