William Grant Still


This research guide is designed to support the February 5-6, 2009 Visions and Voices events. Songs of Separation: William Grant Still and the Dilemmas of American Classical Music.

William Grant Still (1895-1978) was one of America's foremost classical music composers. His oeuvre includes the Afro-American Symphony; Songs of Separation (an art-song cycle); and operas such as Troubled Island and Bayou Legend. A resident of Los Angeles from 1934 until 1978, he also composed scores for film and TV shows (including Perry Mason and Gunsmoke).

Still's artistic vision and life experiences during the era of segregation raise challenging questions about the classical-music canon, race, and California and American history.

An Introduction to William Grant Still

For biographical information and a taste of William Grant Still's music, click on the links below. Please note: These links are available to USC students, faculty, and staff only; for free Website links, please go to the Websites tab in this guide.

- Still, William Grant (From Grove Music Online)
- Darker America (symphonic poem)
- From the Black Belt (symphonic suite)
- From the Hearts of Women (vocal piece)

Selected USC Holdings

Click the link below to find a downloadable list of selected holdings on William Grant Still available at USC. Holdings include scores; books authored by William Grant Still and others; sound recordings; in-process materials; and more.

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William Grant Still

William Grant Still's Highway One - Still, William Grant
Call Number: 11658mus, CD-Audio, Music Library
Greenville, NC: Visionary Records, 2005
Libretto by Verna Arvey
Opera in two scenes

Festive Overture - Still, William Grant
Call Number: M1004.S84F4 1997, Score Collection, Music Library
New York: C. Fischer, 1997
For orchestra

Symphony No. 1: Afro-American - Still, William Grant
Call Number: 5826mus, CD-Audio, Music Library
Colchester, Essex, England: Chandos, p1993
Detroit Symphony Orchestra
Neeme Järvi, conductor

Symphony No. 2: (Song of a New Race): In G Minor - Still, William Grant
Call Number: 6195mus, CD-Audio, Music Library
Colchester, Essex, England: Chandos, p1993
Detroit Symphony Orchestra
Neeme Järvi, conductor

Research Help
This guide was developed by Librarian Sue Tyson (styson@usc.edu), with help from Stephanie Bonjack, Music Librarian and Music Library Head (bonjack@usc.edu), and Music Library Manager Robert Vaughn (rgvaughn@usc.edu).

If you have questions or need help with your research, please feel free to contact Stephanie Bonjack.

Search Tips
When searching for music or works about music, experiment with using various keywords combined with AND, as in:

- composers and opera
- african americans and classical music
- "william grant still" and scores

Try to use synonyms and related concepts in your searching. Use quote marks for exact phrase searching.

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View this page in a format suitable for printers and screen-readers or mobile devices.

* Asterisk in guide title indicates core subject guide
Featured Books

William Grant Still

- Smith, Catherine Parsons
  Call Number: ML410.S855S64 2008, Music Library
  ISBN: 0252033221
  Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008

- Soll, Beverly
  Call Number: ML410.S855S69 2005, Music Library
  ISBN: 1557287899
  Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2005

Musical Metropolis: Los Angeles and the Creation of a Music Culture, 1880-1940 - Marcus, Kenneth
  Call Number: ML200.8.L7M37 2004, Leavey Library
  ISBN: 1403964181
  Also includes CD-ROM available at the Leavey Library Circulation Desk, Call #ML200.8.L7M37 2004 CD-ROM

Just Tell the Story: Troubled Island - Still, William Grant and Still, Judith Anne
  Call Number: ML410.S855J87 2006, Music Library
  ISBN: 1877873020
  Flagstaff: Master-Player Library, 2006
  Title continues: A collection of documents previously published and unpublished, pertaining to the first significant Afro-American grand opera, Troubled Island, by William Grant Still, with librettists Langston Hughes and Verna Arvey / editors, Judith Anne Still, Lisa M. Headlee.

William Grant Still: A Voice High-Sounding - Still, Judith Anne
  Call Number: ML410.S855S75 2003, Music Library
  ISBN: 1877873152
  Flagstaff: Master-Player Library, 2003

William Grant Still: An Oral History - Still, William Grant
  Call Number: ML410.S855A5 2000, Music Library
  Flagstaff: Master-Player Library
  Includes CD of interviews, commentary, and more, Call #12596mus, Music Library.

In One Lifetime - Arvey, Verna
  Call Number: ML410.S855A7 1984, Music Library
  ISBN: 0938626361
  Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1984

Search Tips

When searching for books, experiment with using quote marks for exact phrase searches and with using various keywords combined with AND, as in:

"troubled island" composers and opera
african americans and classical music

Try to use synonyms and related concepts in your searching.

Research Help

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Here are some more books of interest about William Grant Still and related topics:

- **William Grant Still: A Study in Contradictions**  
  Smith, Catherine Parsons  
  Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000  
  ML410.S855S65 2000  
  Music Library

- **William Grant Still: A Bio-Bibliography**  
  Still, Judith Anne  
  Flagstaff: Master-Player Library, 1996  
  ML134.S677S75 1996  
  Music Library

- **Langston Hughes: The Man, his Art, and his Continuing Influence**  
  Trolman, C. James  
  PS3515.U274Z6733 1995  
  Doheny Library

- **William Grant Still and the Fusion of Cultures in American Music**  
  Still, Judith Anne  
  Flagstaff: Master-Player Library  
  ML410.S855W52 1995b  
  Music Library

- **The William Grant Still Reader: Essays on American Music**  
  Still, William Grant  
  Durham: Duke University Press  
  ML410.S855A5 1992  
  Music Library

Comments (0)
The following sources are being searched:

- America: History and Life
- International Index to Music Periodicals Full Text
- JSTOR
- Music Index
- Oxford Music Online
- ProQuest Research Library Complete
- Web of Science®

Other Databases

- JSTOR A growing full text collection of core social science, humanities, and science journals
- ProQuest Historical Newspapers Provides access to full text and page images of major historical newspapers, including the following. Choose from a wealth of historical newspapers under the "Databases" drop-down menu.
  - Los Angeles Sentinel, 1934-2005 – major African American newspaper
  - Los Angeles Times, 1881-1986 - key mainstream newspaper
- ProQuest Research Library Key multidisciplinary database providing fulltext access to magazine and newspaper articles, scholarly journal articles, and dissertations
- Wilson Omnifile Key multidisciplinary database providing citations and full text
- WorldCat Contains over 32 millions records of articles, books, and other resources from libraries around the world

Recommended Databases

Suggested keywords: opera, composers, classical music, african american composers, "troubled island," rac* (includes all terms that begin with the stem rac-, such as race, racism, racist), social conditions, and more.

Be sure to experiment with related terms and synonyms, combining terms with AND, as in:

- opera and composers and california
- rac* and classical music and william grant still

These databases are available to USC subscribers only; for free Web links, please click on the Websites tab in this guide.

- African American Music Reference
- Classical Music Library
- Database of Recorded American Music (DRAM)
- Grove Music Online
  Authority on all aspects of music
- International Index to Music Periodicals Full Text
  Full text index of 375 international music periodicals
- Naxos Music Library
- RILM Abstracts of Musical Literature
  International bibliography of scholarly writings on music and related disciplines
- ProQuest Interdisciplinary Dissertations and Theses
  Provides full text access for dissertations written from 1996 on. Choose Interdisciplinary Dissertations and Theses under "Databases"

- America: History and Life
  The definitive index of articles and other literature covering the history and culture of the US and Canada, from the 15th century to the present
- Web of Science/Arts and Humanities Citation Index
  Multidisciplinary database that includes Social Science Citation Index and Arts and Humanities Citation Index

Comments (0)
### Some Resources on the Web

Here are some Web resources about William Grant Still and related topics:

- Still Going On: Celebrating The Life and Times of William Grant Still
- William Grant Still Collection
- African American Odyssey
- Mississippi Writers and Musicians: William Grant Still
- National Gallery of Art Podcast: Concert of Still's Music
- Judith Anne Still Open Library

### WGS on YouTube!

YouTube has many clips featuring performances of William Grant Still's works. Here's one featuring Rachel Barton Pine, classical violinist and founder of the String Student's Library of Music by Black Composers, a supplemental curriculum featuring music by composers of African decent from around the world:

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