



KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY

Sunday, May 9, 2021
Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts
Michael Stern, *conductor*

WILLIAM GRANT STILL

Mother and Child



The 2020/21 Season is generously sponsored by

SHIRLEY AND BARNETT C. HELZBERG, JR.

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by generous support from the*

**ANNETTE BLOCH
NEXTGEN VENTURE FUND**

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Orchestra Roster

MICHAEL STERN, *Music Director*

JASON SEBER, *David T. Beals III Associate Conductor*

FIRST VIOLINS

Sunho Kim, *Acting Concertmaster*

Miller Nichols Chair

Stirling Trent,

Acting Associate Concertmaster

Chiafei Lin,

Acting Assistant Concertmaster

Gregory Sandomirsky ‡,

Associate Concertmaster Emeritus

Anne-Marie Brown

Betty Chen

Anthony DeMarco

Susan Goldenberg*

Tomoko Iguchi

Dorris Dai Janssen

Vladimir Rykov

Alex Shum*

SECOND VIOLINS

Tamamo Someya Gibbs, *Principal*

Kristin Velicer, *Acting Associate Principal*

Minhye Helena Choi,

Acting Assistant Principal

Nancy Beckmann

Mary Garcia Grant

Kevin Hao ‡

Kazato Inouye

Rena Ishii

Stephanie Larsen

Francesca Manheim

VIOLAS

Matthew Sinno, *Acting Principal*

Jessica Nance, *Acting Associate Principal*

Duke Lee, *Acting Assistant Principal*

Kent Brauninger

Sean Brumble

Marvin Gruenbaum

Jenifer Houck

Jesse Yukimura

CELLOS

Mark Gibbs, *Principal*

Robert A. Kipp Chair

Susie Yang, *Associate Principal*

Richard Hill Chair

Alexander East, *Assistant Principal*

Maria Crosby

John Eadie

Lawrence Figg

Rung Lee*

Meredith McCook

Allen Probus

DOUBLE BASSES

Jeffrey Kail, *Principal*

Evan Halloin, *Associate Principal*

Brandon Mason ‡

Caleb Quillen

Richard Ryan

Nash Tomey

FLUTES

Michael Gordon, *Principal*

Marylou and John Dodds Turner Chair

Shannon Finney, *Associate Principal*

Kayla Burggraf

PICCOLO

Kayla Burggraf

OBOES

Kristina Fulton, *Principal*

Shirley Bush Helzberg Chair

Alison Chung, *Associate Principal*

CLARINETS

Raymond Santos, *Principal*

Bill and Peggy Lyons Chair

Silvio Guitian, *Associate Principal*

John Klinghammer

E-FLAT CLARINET

Silvio Guitian

BASS CLARINET

John Klinghammer

BASSOONS

Ann Bilderback, *Principal*

Barton P. and Mary D. Cohen Chair

Thomas DeWitt, *Associate Principal*

Maxwell Pipinich

CONTRABASSOON

Thomas DeWitt

HORNS

Alberto Suarez, *Principal*

Landon and Sarah Rowland Chair

David Sullivan, *Associate Principal*

Elizabeth Gray

David Gamble

Stephen Multer,

Associate Principal Emeritus

TRUMPETS

Julian Kaplan, *Principal*

James B. and Annabel Nutter Chair

Steven Franklin, *Associate Principal*

Brian Rood ‡

TROMBONES

Roger Oyster, *Principal*

Porter Wyatt Henderson,

Associate Principal

Adam Rainey

BASS TROMBONE

Adam Rainey

TUBA

Joe LeFevre, *Principal*

Frank Byrne Chair

TIMPANI

Timothy Jepson, *Principal*

Michael and Susan Newburger Chair

PERCUSSION

Josh Jones^, *Principal*

David Yoon, *Associate Principal*

HARP

Katherine Siochi, *Principal*

LIBRARIANS

Elena Lence Talley, *Principal*

Fabrice Curtis

* Non-Rotating Musician

^ New Member

‡ On Leave of Absence

WILLIAM GRANT STILL

Mother and Child (1943)

7 minutes

Mother and Child is one of William Grant Still's most popular works and, according to his daughter, one of his favorite compositions of his own. The piece was written in 1943 during a challenging period in his life. Still had turned down the most lucrative film commission he had ever received, for "Stormy Weather," because he thought the movie depicted Black people badly and the studio's actions were degrading. This principled stand was costly but indicative of Still's belief in human rights and the value of Black lives. Among the works he composed at this time was his Suite for Violin and Piano. He later described the creative impetus for his suite:

[W]hen I was asked to compose a suite for violin and piano, I thought of three contemporary Negro [*sic*] artists whom I admire and resolve to try to catch in music my feeling for an outstanding work by each of them.

The second movement of the suite was inspired by a chalk drawing by Sargent Claude Johnson, a Black artist based in San Francisco. The warm tones of the drawing depict a young Black woman gently cradling the head of her child seeking refuge in her embrace as she rests her head in her other arm with a pensive stare. Spare of detail, the artwork's rounded lines convey a complex message that resonated with Still. Perhaps the image reminded Still of his beloved mother, who dispensed discipline and encouragement in equal measure. As he noted, "I rarely missed passing through a day without a licking. But I needed them."

The suite premiered in early 1944 and Still wasted no time in arranging the second movement for several different instrumentations, including string orchestra. Much like the artwork that inspired it, *Mother and Child*'s deceptive simplicity is the perfect way to express the multifaceted emotions that inhabit the relationship between a mother and her child. With gentle alternation between major and minor, the strings murmur softly and then soar, always singing. More than a lullaby, *Mother and Child* offers a compact musical portrait of maternal love. *ETW*



Mother and Child
Sargent Claude Johnson, c. 1932
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Used by permission



WILLIAM GRANT STILL
(1895-1978)

William Grant Still was born in Woodinville, Mississippi, in 1895. His father died a few months later and Still's mother moved to Little Rock, Arkansas, where she raised the youth and taught high school English. Still began violin studies at age 14 and learned how to play several other instruments, including cello and oboe. Still's stepfather encouraged his musical interests by taking him to concerts and buying recordings of classical music. Still entered Wilberforce University in Ohio in 1911 and split his time between science courses and music, beginning to compose and learn orchestration. He left Wilberforce in 1915 and started work as a freelance performer and arranger for bands led by W.C. Handy, Paul Whiteman and Artie Shaw, among others.



Still continued his studies intermittently, working with composer George Chadwick at the New England Conservatory, attending classes at Oberlin Conservatory of Music and taking private lessons with experimental composer Edgard Varèse. He received various scholarships as well as Guggenheim and Rosenwald fellowships that helped further his burgeoning career. Commissions were forthcoming from the Cleveland Orchestra, Columbia Broadcasting System and 1939 New York World's Fair, plus many others. He eventually moved to Los Angeles and worked extensively scoring music for films and writing arrangements for radio broadcasts.

Noted for so many "firsts" with respect to race and classical music, Still was the first Black composer to have a symphony performed by a professional orchestra for a U.S. audience when the Rochester Philharmonic premiered his Symphony No. 1, "Afro-American," in 1931. He conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1936, as the first Black conductor to lead a major U.S. orchestra, and his opera, *Troubled Island*, was the first by a Black composer to be nationally televised.

Still was a prolific composer, writing more than 150 compositions, including operas, ballets, symphonies, choral works, solo vocal works and chamber music. He was familiar with Harlem Renaissance writers such as Paul Laurence Dunbar and Langston Hughes, and set many of their poems to music. He was also comfortable with his unique musical voice, blending European heritage and training with the jazz, blues and spirituals that invigorate American music. This duality was mirrored by his success in both commercial music and the concert hall. Still's many pioneering achievements were recognized by the award of honorary doctorates from Howard University, Oberlin College, University of Arkansas, Pepperdine University, New England Conservatory, Peabody Conservatory and the University of Southern California. **ETW**



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