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Signifyin(g): A Semiotic Analysis of Symphonic Works by William Grant Still, William Levi Dawson, and Florence B. Price

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SIGNIFYING: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF SYMPHONIC WORKS BY
WILLIAM GRANT STILL, WILLIAM LEVI DAWSON,
AND FLORENCE B. PRICE

By

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ABSTRACT

William Grant Still (1895-1978), Florence B. Price (1888-1953), and William Levi Dawson (1899-1990) were all black composers writing in a time of rebirth in the black literary arts called “The Harlem Renaissance” or “The Black Renaissance.” Black artists of all mediums—writers, poets, painters, and musicians—were encouraged by black leaders to draw upon their own African cultural heritage and events of recent black history, including lynchings, riots, segregation, and discrimination, for inspiration in their own respective artistic media. Young African-American composers were also influenced, ironically, by the Czech composer Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904), who recognized and promoted the wealth of American material found in the melodies and harmonies of the blues, spirituals, and jazz for use in concert music. Though their conservatory training focused primarily on traditional Western music compositional techniques, Still, Price, and Dawson are recognized for incorporating these “black” musical styles into their classical compositions.

Many scholars, such as Rae Linda Brown, Eileen Southern, Samuel Floyd, and Teresa Shelton [Reed] have analyzed works by these composers. While their analyses addressed traditional Western aspects of these works, they do not account for the bifurcated roots of the musical style of these three composers. This study will fuse four analytical techniques: a semiotic analysis based on the literary theory of Henry Louis Gates in his book The Signifyin(g) Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism, traditional formal analysis, linear reductions and voice-leading graphs, as well as an identification of musical traits associated with African or black music. In so doing, I hope to provide a clearer understanding of the black musical narrative in Still’s Afro-American Symphony, Price’s E minor Symphony, and Dawson’s Negro Folk Symphony, to shed light on the critical role they played in the development of a unique American style.
CHAPTER 1
Introduction and Biographies of Composers

Introduction

Florence Price, William Grant Still, and William Levi Dawson are often grouped together by scholars as representatives of an important period in the development of American art music. They composed their early symphonies during a time of rebirth in the black literary arts: the 1920s and 1930s. Black artists of all mediums—writers, poets, painters, and musicians—were encouraged by black leaders to draw upon their own cultural heritage. Ironically, young black composers were especially influenced by the nationalistic style promoted by Antonín Dvořák:

I am now satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the negro melodies. This must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States. When I first came here last year I was impressed with this idea and it has developed into a settled conviction. These beautiful and varied themes are the product of the soil. They are American.¹

These composers were encouraged to draw on the wealth of American material found in the melodies and harmonies of the blues, spirituals, and jazz for use in concert music. They also exploited the rhythms of “Negro” dances and set texts by black poets in their art songs. This refocusing on black American music, art, and literature became known as “The Harlem Renaissance” or “The Black Renaissance.” Price, Still, and Dawson were recognized for incorporating these “black” musical styles into their classical compositions.

Almost as quickly as Dvořák’s focus on native musics began inspiring black composers, critics were calling into question the true origins of this so called “national” music. The question of authenticity of black music dates back to the nineteenth century and continues to be a source of great debate today. The key question in the debate is, whether Afro-American folk-songs/spirituals are truly “African” or are they derived from earlier protestant hymns?

Even the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* lists spirituals within two subcategories, White spiritual and African-American spiritual. One of the earliest opinions on the origins of black music is given by Richard Wallaschek in his book *Primitive Music* (1893). In Wallaschek’s discussion of the book *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867), he writes, “I cannot think that these[negro-songs]…deserve the praise given by the editors, for they are unmistakably ‘arranged’—not to say ignorantly borrowed—from the national songs of all nations, from military signals, well-known marches, German student-songs, etc.”

Wallaschek’s opinion is based on the written transcriptions provided by the editor’s of *Slave Songs* in which they state:

The best that we can do, however, with paper and types, or even with voices, will convey but a faint shadow of the original. The voices of colored people have a peculiar quality that nothing can imitate; and the intonations and delicate variations of even one singer cannot be reproduced on paper. And I despair of conveying any notion of the effect of a number singing together. …they seem not infrequently to strike sounds that cannot be precisely represented by the gamut, and abound in slides from one note to another, and turns and cadences not in articulated notes. …There are also apparent irregularities in the time, which it is not less difficult to express accurately.

In agreement with Wallaschek, there are many writers who have argued a white origin to black songs using only transcriptions of the songs as the basis for their arguments. However, the transcriptions are in themselves inherently flawed (as noted in the above quote). The transcriptions were made by white scholars who had been trained in Western/European musical traditions. It can only be fair to say that the transcribers had no way of accurately depicting the sounds they heard from a Western musical understanding. Therefore any transcription would closely resemble Western music.

Though these western-style transcriptions certainly hid other non-European influences, it would also be hard to justify a notion that the music produced by blacks was totally original. The slaves brought to America would surely have been influenced by the music of their captors, as well as by the music of Christian missionaries living in Africa before the slave trade. However, no matter how ingrained this music may have been, it seems unlikely that the slaves

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did not remember the music of their native lands, which would have been passed down through
generations in an oral tradition.

Though the answer to the problem of authenticity of music in the United States may
never be resolved, Dvorák himself responded to this question and answered his critics saying:

The point has been urged that many of these touching songs, like those of Foster, have
not been composed by the negroes themselves, but are the work of white men, while
others did not originate on the plantation, but were imported from Africa. It seems to me
that this matters but little. One might as well condemn the Hungarian Rhapsody because
Liszt could not speak Hungarian. The important thing is that the inspiration for such
music should come from the right source, and that the music itself should be a true
expression of the people’s real feelings.⁴

In studying Still, Dawson, and Price, however, the question may ultimately prove to be
moot, because these composers employed musical stylistic features that were generally perceived
as African-influenced. For, as Dvorák said, “All races have their distinctively national songs,
which they at once recognize as their own, even if they have never heard them before.”⁵

Still, Price, and Dawson all grew up in the segregated South. Though their educational
paths and musical experiences differed, they all had a common goal: to compose music in a
nationalistic style, employing the folk idioms and spirituals they heard as children.

This study will examine the first symphonies of each composer. It will provide a method
for recognition and understanding of black musical narrative in compositions written by these
black composers.

**William Grant Still**

William Grant Still was born in Woodville, Mississippi, May 11, 1895. Both of his
parents were teachers with college educations. His father was a music teacher at the Agricultural
and Mechanical college of Alabama and died when Still was only three months old. After the
death of his father, his mother moved the family to Little Rock, Arkansas, where she had
relatives. Once there, his mother accepted a teaching job, which she held until her death in 1927.

One of Still’s earliest musical influences was his grandmother, who sang hymns and
spirituals around the house as she did her daily chores, thereby exposing him to the traditional
music of southern blacks—many of whom were former slaves. Verna Arvey notes that Still

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⁵ Dvorák, “Music in America,” 432.
“grew up with the songs of his people, and grew to love the old hymns.”6 His stepfather, Charles B. Shepperson broadened his musical tastes and background by exposing him to the classical European tradition. Shepperson was a railway clerk with a great love of music. He made enough money to afford a phonograph, therefore enabling the family to listen to a variety of recorded music.

Still graduated from high school as the class valedictorian and began his college career at age 16 at Wilberforce University. Though he was highly interested in music, his mother felt that there would be no future for him as a musician and encouraged him to become a doctor. Still respected his mother’s wishes and worked toward a Bachelor of Science degree in medicine. The fact that he was working on a science degree did not deter his musical interests. He was able to organize a string quartet in which he played violin for which he wrote some of his first arrangements. Still later became the bandleader and was able to learn to play many different instruments and increase his role as an orchestrator. Verna Arvey discusses his role: “In his capacity as bandleader, he had to learn to play different instruments such as the piccolo and saxophone so that he could teach them to other players. The intimate knowledge of all instruments gained in this fashion has meant much to him in later years, and to his career as an orchestrator.”7

Though Still was eventually awarded a diploma of honor and the honorary degree of Masters of Music in 1936, he left Wilberforce two months before his graduation in 1915 to pursue a career as a professional musician. After leaving Wilberforce, Still had a hard time finding steady work; he worked at several odd jobs, such as playing oboe and cello with various orchestras, for very little money. In 1917, however, Still received a legacy from his father to attend Oberlin, which allowed him to study theory and violin privately. When the legacy was gone, Still was informed that the Theory Committee had created a scholarship for him that would cover his tuition, after which he took composition lessons from Dr. George W. Andrews. Still’s studies at Oberlin were interrupted when he enlisted in the Navy in 1918. After his tour in the military, he returned to Oberlin for a short period but did not earn a degree. He instead moved to New York and went to work for W. C. Handy as an arranger.


Still’s career as an arranger was quite impressive. At various points he arranged for Earl Carroll, Sophie Tucker, and Artie Shaw, for whom he arranged *Frenesi*. He also worked for both CBS and NBC radio.\(^8\) During his time at NBC, Still met Willard Robinson and soon began making arrangements for Robinson’s “Deep River” program. It was from this relationship that Still became the first Afro-American man to lead a radio orchestra of white men.\(^9\)

After working for Handy, Still was offered and accepted a job with Eubie Blake’s orchestra for “Shuffle Along.” Still accumulated enough money to return to school and pay his own way. Still was accepted into the New England School of Music and was told that George W. Chadwick would teach him composition free of charge. However, Still only studied with Chadwick for four months before accepting the position of Recording Director for the Black Swan Phonograph Company.

It was during this time with the Black Swan Phonograph Company that Still learned of a scholarship offered by Edgar Varèse. Varèse was searching for a talented black student/composer who was interested in studying composition. Still received the scholarship and spent two years (1923-1925) studying with Varèse, learning to compose in the modernist style. Still later commented on his studies with Varèse in an interview by R. Donald Brown by proclaiming:

> That [study of “ultra-modern” music] expanded my horizon, although I admit that it wasn’t the type of expression that suited me. However, I could use many things that that school of musical thought represented, and I welcomed that [introduction to useful ideas].\(^10\)

Still composed several works during his time with Varèse including: *Brown Baby*, *Memphis Man* (which he published under the pseudonym of Willy M. Grant), *Three Fantastic Dances*, and many others. His first work to be subjected to critical review was entitled *From the Land of Dreams*. It was performed by the Composers’ Guild in New York on February 8, 1925. When

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Still heard the performance, he realized that he was not at his best composing in an ultra-modern idiom. In fact, he referred to the work as “a musical portrait of an owl with a headache.” Following this uncomfortable flirtation with the modernist style, he then determined to find his own musical idiom.

During the period between the mid-twenties and early 1930s Still experimented with various compositional styles. He began to make a compromise within styles, “fusing the modernistic with the racial.” Still, commented on this development of an individual style:

After this period [of writing “ultramodern” music], I felt that I wanted for a while to devote myself to writing racial music. And here, because of my own racial background, a great many people decided that I ought to confine myself to that sort of music. In that too, I disagreed. I was glad to write Negro music then, and I still do it when I feel so inclined, for I have a great love and respect for the idiom. But it has certainly not been the only musical idiom to attract me.

Still’s Afro-American Symphony was the first symphony by a black composer to be performed by a major orchestra. It was also one of a trilogy of works, which includes Africa (1930) and Symphony in G minor: Song of a New Race (1937), to incorporate a new black nationalistic style, a style in which he composed for about fifteen years. Though black composers had been writing works that incorporated the use of Negro folk idioms such as spirituals, work songs, and dance songs, the Afro-American Symphony was the first to employ the blues and jazz idioms. In the program notes on the score he explained his goal:

Like so many works which are important to their creators, The Afro-American Symphony was forming over a period of years. [It was completed in 1930.] Themes were occurring to me, were duly noted, and an overall form was slowly growing. I knew that it had to be an American work; and I wanted to demonstrate how the blues, so often considered a lowly expression, could be elevated to the highest musical level.

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11 Arvey, Studies of Contemporary American Composers, 16.
12 Carol J. Oja, “‘New Music’ and the ‘New Negro’: The Background of William Grant Still’s Afro-American Symphony,” Black Music Research Journal 12, no. 2 (Fall 1992), 154-155.
Many years later, in 1967, Still gave a speech at the annual convention of the National Association of Negro Musicians in which he reflected upon his compositional endeavor:

"Long before writing this symphony I had recognized the musical value of the Blues and had decided to use a theme in the Blues idiom as the basis for a major symphonic composition. When I was ready to launch this project I did not want to use a theme some folk singer had already created but decided to create my own theme in the Blues idiom."

"Though the *Afro-American Symphony* is one of the most famous works Still produced, he was quite a prolific composer. He composed songs for piano, band, chamber ensembles, and even the accordion. But perhaps his most notable works are his operas and large orchestra works:

"Fortunately for me, nobody tried to talk me out of the two things that strikingly influenced my musical learnings, possibly because those influences were not the sort which make themselves known to outsiders as readily as others. The first was my love for grand opera, born around 1911 when my stepfather bought many of the early Red Seal recordings for our home record library. I knew then that I would be happy only if someday I could compose operatic music, and I have definitely leaned toward a lyric style for that reason.

"The second influence had to do with writing for the symphony orchestra, something which has deeply interested me from the very start of my musical life."

**William Levi Dawson**

William Levi Dawson was born in Anniston, Alabama on September 26, 1899. He was the first of seven children born to George W. and Eliza Starkey Dawson. George W. Dawson was a native of Albany, Georgia who was probably born into slavery and did not have the opportunity to acquire an education. He migrated to Anniston where he found a job with an ice company and later unloaded coal to earn a living. Possibly because he had not been educated himself, he did not place any value in formal education.

William’s mother, Eliza, however, was an educated woman from a family with extensive property holdings. She was the source of William’s first musical experiences. Eliza was a

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deeply religious woman who would sing songs from camp meetings, revivals, and other religious services as well as the folk songs she heard her grandparents, former slaves, sing.

Anniston was not a place of many formal concerts, but there were a number of informal musical events that influenced and inspired the young Dawson. One such event involved the recurring prayer meetings that were held in the small church near his home. There he would stand outside and listen to the singing during the meetings. Dawson also had occasion to hear the Fisk Jubilee Singers perform in Anniston.  

Though singing was important to Dawson, he was also fascinated by instrumental music. He was especially impressed by the small Afro-American band directed by S. W. Gresham, a former bandmaster at Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute. It was from his contact with this band that Dawson became enamored with playing the trombone. He first learned to play the mellophone with the assistance of members of the band. Dawson then received private instruction on the horn from Gresham until Gresham’s untimely death one month later. Dawson’s association with Gresham implanted a strong desire in him to attend Tuskegee Institute himself, as public schools for Negro children had not yet been established in Anniston.  

Dawson, with the support of his mother, left home to enter the Tuskegee Institute in 1913 at the age of 13. Once there, he worked on the school farm during the day and at night he would attend classes. Dawson became a member of the choir and later the band, where he learned to play trombone and write scales and melodies. The director of the band, Captain Frank L. Drye, encouraged Dawson to help the other members of the band learn their instruments. This process allowed Dawson to learn about the general workings of music and expanded his working knowledge of the individual instruments.  

Dawson graduated from Tuskegee in 1921 and was promptly hired by the Kansas Vocational College to be the band director. Dawson’s need to keep improving himself and continue his education motivated him to enroll at Washburn College in Topeka. Though school officials were reluctant to allow him to enroll, due to the color of his skin and his lack of previous college credit, Dawson passed a special exam administered by the Dean of the Music


School, Henry V. Stearns, which led to his admission. While at Washburn, Dawson took classes in composition and orchestration that were taught by Stearns. It was Stearns who encouraged him to continue his studies in composition with Adolph Weidig.

Dawson moved to Kansas City, Missouri, in 1922 when he accepted the job of bandmaster at Lincoln High School. Here he took over the chorus and began arranging spirituals. He also continued his education by enrolling in the Horner Institute, where he studied composition with Dr. Carl Busch. Upon his graduation with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1925, Dawson moved to Chicago to study at the American Conservatory. Here, following his earlier plans and fulfilling the desires of his former teacher Stearns, he received composition instruction from Adolph Weidig. He completed his studies at the Conservatory in 1927, receiving his Master’s degree in composition. While studying at the Conservatory, Dawson auditioned for the Chicago Civic Orchestra and made first-chair trombone—a position he held until 1930. While playing in the orchestra, Dawson continued to study composition. Upon completion of his Masters degree, he began compositional study with Dr. Thorvald Otterstrom. It was under Otterstrom’s tutelage that Dawson began composing a symphony based on Negro folk-songs, which came to be known as the *Negro Folk Symphony*. In 1931 Dawson moved to the Tuskegee Institute, where he took over as the head of the School of Music, a position he held until 1955.²²

Although Dawson is best known for his choral works that were performed by his Tuskegee choir, the *Negro Folk Symphony* is arguably his most popular orchestral work. Like Still, Dawson infused many black folk idioms into his music. In fact, Dawson commented on his efforts as a composer to “write a symphony in the Negro folk idiom, based on authentic folk music, but in the same symphonic form used by composers of the romantic nationalist school.”²³ After the premier and several subsequent performances, Dawson visited West Africa in 1952. Upon his return from this trip, he made revisions to his popular score. Though the symphony already had an authentic African-American sound, he now infused the piece with the more complex African rhythms that he had encountered in his travels.


**Florence Beatrice Price**

Florence Beatrice Smith was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. Though there is some dispute as to the year of her birth, most research places her birthday as 9 April, 1888. She was born into a fairly prominent black family that, as William Grant Still had remarked about his own childhood, “neither knew wealth nor poverty,” but lived in a “comfortable middle-class home with luxuries such as books, musical instruments, and phonograph records in quantities found in few other homes.”

Florence Smith’s father, Dr. James H. Smith, was a dentist who had great difficulty finding training. He began studying dentistry in 1858 under friends of his former employer. This form of study lasted for three years until he entered the army. Upon his return from the army in 1863, he was denied entrance into dental school due to his color. Although barred from formal study, he continued to train with the same local dentists with which he had previously studied. When he was finally allowed to take the dental certification examination one year later, he was granted the certificate of dentistry. Florence’s mother, Florence Gulliver Smith, was the child of mixed parents and had been given every opportunity for an excellent education. She became a school teacher in Indianapolis and taught all subjects including music before she was married to James H. Smith.

There is little information concerning Florence Beatrice’s early education in Little Rock. Her earliest experience in music education came from her mother, who encouraged her to compose and perform her works at a recital when Florence was four. Florence also attended the black public schools in Little Rock, where she graduated at the age of fourteen as class valedictorian.

After her graduation, Florence enrolled at the New England Conservatory of Music in 1903, as it was one of the few music schools in the country that accepted black students. Racism still very much existed in Boston as in the rest of the country, however. Blacks were essentially barred from voting through literacy laws, poll taxes, and mandated all-white primaries. These

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laws not only kept poor uneducated blacks from registering to vote, but also kept the poor illiterate whites from registering as well. It was because of this existing racism that Florence’s mother enrolled her as a “Mexican student” at the New England Conservatory.26

Florence received two degrees in her three years at the New England Conservatory, neither of which was in composition, though she did study composition and counterpoint with Benjamin Cutter, George Chadwick, and Frederick Converse. She received a Soloists Diploma in organ and a Teachers Diploma in piano. After her graduation, Price returned to Arkansas and became a teacher.27

Florence began her teaching career in the town of Cotton Plant, Arkansas at the Arkadelphia Academy where she also gave private piano lessons. The Arkadelphia Academy, an all black school that was founded and operated on the model endorsed by Booker T. Washington, was funded in large part by white philanthropists.28 However, her career as a public school teacher was short lived. Less than a year later, she accepted a teaching job at Shorter College in North Little Rock. She held this position at the college until 1910, when she became the head of the music department at Clark University in Atlanta, Georgia. As a woman, achieving the rank of department head was a tremendous feat in itself. However, Florence also had a short tenure at Clark, leaving in 1912 to marry an attorney, Thomas J. Price, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

After her marriage, Florence B. Price managed her family and an active career as a piano teacher. She had three children, one boy who died in infancy, and two girls. In memory of her son, she dedicated an art song for voice and piano with words by Julia Johnson Davis, “To My Little Son.” As she continued to compose, she began to win some of the newly established awards for black musicians. Price won second place in the Opportunity magazine’s Holstein Prize competition both in 1925 and again in 1927. In spite of her growing reputation as a composer, Price still continued to suffer under the discriminatory laws and attitudes that were in

28 Many black schools were funded by northern white philanthropists and churches, due, in part, to the efforts of Booker T. Washington, who did an extensive amount of fund raising for the Tuskegee Institute. He was able to sustain the school by preaching a separate but equal doctrine.
place in the South and was denied membership into the Arkansas Music Teachers Association simply because of the color of her skin.\textsuperscript{29} In 1927, the family moved to Chicago in search of better economic and racial conditions.

During her time in Chicago, Price took advantage of the opportunity to further educate herself. She studied at a number of institutions—the Chicago Musical College, the American Conservatory, Chicago Teachers College, Central YMCA College, Lewis Institute, and the University of Chicago. She also took part in various musical activities and by 1928 had two publishers, G. Schirmer and McKinley. It was McKinley publishing company that became very important in her professional life, as they published her teaching pieces for beginning piano students. In addition to these works, Price was also commissioned to write music for radio commercials.\textsuperscript{30}

The early 1930’s were a time of great accomplishment for Price. Her first truly national recognition came in 1932 when she had four compositions acknowledged in the Wanamaker Music Composition Contest. Her \textit{Symphony in E Minor} won first place and earned a $500 cash prize in the symphonic composition category. She also received an honorable mention for her composition, \textit{Ethiopia’s Shadow in America}. In the category of piano compositions she was awarded $250 for her first place finish for \textit{Sonata in E Minor} and another honorable mention for \textit{Piano Fantasie}. It is also during this time that she became known nationally as a symphonist. Her award winning symphony was given a premiere performance by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Frederick Stock, on 15 June 1933 at the Century of Progress Exhibition. This was an amazing accomplishment in that it marked Price as the first black woman composer in history to have a symphonic work performed by a major American orchestra.\textsuperscript{31}

The following year, 1934, Price was invited by the Chicago Musical College to appear as soloist in the premiere of her \textit{Piano Concerto in One Movement}. One year later, she returned to Little Rock to give a recital of her own compositions at Dunbar High School, an event that was sponsored by the Philander Smith College Alumni Association. In 1940, thanks to the sponsorship of John Alden Carpenter, Price became a member of ASCAP. She also joined the

\textsuperscript{29} Brown, “Selected Orchestra Music,” 28.


\textsuperscript{31} Brown, “Selected Orchestral Music,” 32.
National Association for American Composers and Conductors that same year. After the success of her E Minor symphony, her orchestral compositions were performed by several different orchestras including the Detroit Symphony, the Michigan WPA Symphony, and the American Symphony. She also had success in having many of her art songs performed by some of the leading singers of the time including Marian Anderson, Roland Hayes, Leontyne Price, and Blanche Thebom to name a few.\(^{32}\)

Even with her many symphonic successes, she had trouble getting her orchestra works published. In a letter written to Dr. Serge Koussevitzky, the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1924-1949), she makes an impassioned plea by writing:

My dear Dr. Koussevitzky,

To begin with I have two handicaps—those of sex and race. I am a woman; and I have some Negro blood in my veins. Knowing the worst, then, would you be good enough to hold in check the possible inclination to regard a woman’s composition as long on emotionalism but short on virility and thought content—until you shall have examined some of my work?

As to the handicap of race, may I relieve you by saying that I neither expect nor ask any concession on that score. I should like to be judged on merit alone—the great trouble having been to get conductors, who know nothing of my work...to even consent to examine a score.\(^{33}\)

Price was a very productive composer producing about 300 compositions.\(^{34}\) It is very difficult to categorize her within a single stylistic category, for her output includes chamber works, vocal pieces, songs for organ, as well as orchestral compositions. A large portion of her publications, however, were beginning teaching pieces, which were published by Clayton, McKinley, Theodore Presser, and Carl Fischer.

Price died in May 1953 before a scheduled trip to Europe to help market her music there. During her lifetime she received professional accolades, won major composition contests, had pieces performed by well-known artists, and was published by many companies, yet she remains

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\(^{34}\) Brown, “Selected Orchestral Music,” 5.
in relative obscurity today. This may be due to the fact that her major symphonic works were never published.

**Conclusion**

This study will examine William Grant Still’s *Afro-American Symphony*, William Levi Dawson’s *Negro Folk Symphony*, and Florence Price’s E minor Symphony, symphonies that critically helped to define a new American art music, influenced by the music of Western Europe as well as by native Afro-American styles. This project should give a clearer understanding of black musical narrative in compositions written by black composers, and will shed light on the critical role these composers played in the development of a unique American art music.

Chapter Two provides a brief review of the theoretical ideas that have been used previously to analyze similar style works. It leads into the formation of my theoretical model for which this study is based. Chapters Three-Five put my method into practice discussing each composer’s work in order of their premier performances. The final chapter provides my concluding thoughts.
CHAPTER 2
Theoretical Model for Black Topics in Music

Despite few performances during the last 40 or 50 years, the works of Still, Price and Dawson have received some scholarly attention. Rae Linda Brown, John Andrew Johnson, and Eileen Southern approach the music of these composers in a traditional, historical fashion, with some commentary on the surface-level formal design of the music.35 Samuel Floyd and Teresa Shelton [Reed] endeavor toward a more analytical understanding of these works.36 Floyd proposes an analytical method for discussing black musical traits in the music of Still. Shelton [Reed], on the other hand, established a method of her own based on the structuralist aspects of Eero Tarasti’s model for musical semiotics. She uses this model in a paradigmatic categorization of Price’s E-minor Piano Sonata. This methodological focus emphasizes the European structural aspects of the work, rather than the fundamental black elements in the music. While each of these modes of analysis may produce intriguing and unique results on their own, they do not account for the bifurcated roots of Still, Price, and Dawson’s musical style. Therefore, an analysis of the music that elaborates on both the Western-influenced traits as well as the “Afro-American” traits that are infused in Price, Still, and Dawson’s music is essential.

Semiotic approaches to musical analysis have been discussed by Jean-Jacques Nattiez, Kofi Agawu, Robert Hatten, Carolyn Abbate, Raymond Monelle, Leonard Ratner, Eero Tarasti,


and others. Ratner, Agawu, and Hatten have adapted traditional models of linguistic semiotics, as previously described by Charles S. Pierce and shaped for music by Tarasti. Their approaches will form the foundation for the current analytic study. The aim of a semiotic approach to musical analysis, according to Agawu, is “to provide an account of a piece, in which the domains of expression are integrated with those of structure.” To achieve this goal the analyst may construct a hierarchical system of topics, which is a twofold-system of musical signs that consist of a signifier and a signified. The signifier is a “certain disposition of musical dimensions,” whereas the signified is “a conventional stylistic unit, often but not always referential in quality.” Musical signifiers may be identified within the contexts of melody, harmony, meter, and rhythm or by other musical qualities, recalling or signifying other musics or even extra-musical events, ideas, and styles. Agawu’s topics are designated in a list that he calls the “Universe of Topic [sic],” which is, as he states, unique to a particular work or group of works. For a detailed discussion of topics and their descriptions it is helpful to turn to the work of Leonard Ratner. Ratner describes topics of the Classic period in the following manner:

From its contacts with worship, poetry, drama, entertainment, dance, ceremony, the military, the hunt, and the life of the lower classes, music in the early 18th century developed a thesaurus of characteristic figures, which formed a rich legacy for classic composers. Some of these figures were associated with various feelings and affections; others had a picturesque flavor. They are designated here as topics – subjects for musical discourse. Topics appear as fully worked out pieces, i.e., types, or as figures and progressions within a piece, i.e., styles. The distinction between types and styles is

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flexible; minuets and marches represent complete types of composition, but they also furnish styles for other pieces.\textsuperscript{41}

In much the same fashion, many African musical characteristics and tendencies were passed through generations of black Americans during gatherings featuring worship, singing, and dancing. This ceremony is sometimes referred to as the ring shout. The ring shout was “the main context in which Africans recognized values common to them – the values of ancestor worship and contact, communication and teaching through storytelling and trickster expressions, and of various other symbolic devices.”\textsuperscript{42} Therefore, these black musical traits may be designated as Afro-American musical topics.

Tarasti’s semiotic theory is one that is based on the structural aspects of music. It is an adaptation of A. J. Greimas’s theory as well as the methods outlined in Pierce’s literary theory. Teresa Shelton [Reed], likewise, modifies Tarasti’s structural models and develops her own semiotic method to analyze Price’s Sonata in E minor.

Shelton [Reed] analyzes Price’s Sonata for several different reasons but the principal was her desire to analyze a work by a black female composer. She states:

The standard repertoire of music literature taught and performed in institutions of higher learning continues to represent an overwhelmingly male, European perspective. While many efforts to diversify the canon have been underway in recent years, it is extremely rare to find scholarly works within the field of music theory (as opposed to musicology or ethnomusicology) that treat pieces by American, female composers of color.\textsuperscript{43}

While her analysis of Price’s Sonata reveals an interesting methodology based on structural semiotics, her argument for the study of this work is based entirely on ethnicity and gender and does not place any emphasis on recognizing or analyzing characteristic black styles. While diversifying the canon is in itself worthwhile, it seems even more essential to explore the stylistic origins and historic legacy of not only Price’s musical vocabulary, but Still’s and Dawson’s as well.

\textsuperscript{41} Ratner, \textit{Classic Music}, 9.


\textsuperscript{43} Shelton [Reed], “Idiosyncrasies of Music Narrative,” 12.
A thorough analysis of this music must include an exploration of the black musical traits it incorporates. Floyd proclaims that black music analysis should be “a mode of inquiry that is consistent with the nature of black music, that is grounded in black music, and that is more appropriate than other, existing modes for the perception, study, and evaluation of black musical products.”

To this extent, he proposes a system of analysis based on the critical literary theory proposed by Henry Louis Gates: “signifyin(g).” Gates bases his theory on the desire to “allow the black tradition to speak for itself about its nature and various functions, rather than to read it, or analyze it, in terms of literary theories borrowed whole from other traditions, appropriated from without.” According to Gates, there are several different correct or at least partially correct definitions of signifyin(g). However, the definition that seems most to his liking is Claudia Mitchell-Kernan’s, who says that when someone is signifyin(g) the “apparent meaning serves as a key which directs hearers to some shared knowledge, attitudes, and values or signals that reference must be produced metaphorically.” In order to do so, she continues, depends on “shared knowledge of the participants,” which operates on two levels. The two levels, to which Mitchell-Kernan refers, depend on both the speaker and his or her audience. They both must know that signifyin(g) is occurring and, thus, must know that the true meaning does not match the literal; and they should have “shared knowledge” of the reinterpretation of the content. In other words, successfully signifyin(g) depends on the ability of the signifier to invoke an “absent meaning ambiguously ‘present’ in a carefully wrought statement.”

In his book, The Power of Black Music, Floyd defines signifyin(g) as figurative, implicative speech in the black vernacular. In other words, it is a way of saying one thing and

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44 Floyd, “Ring Shout!,” 265.

45 Henry Louis Gates, Jr., The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Gates writes this term in such a manner to denote the phonetic silent (g) in black vernacular speech.


48 Gates, The Signifying Monkey, 86.
meaning something else using Afro-American stylistic tropes. Floyd then discusses musical
signifyin(g), which he says refers to rhetorical use of musical tropes and “carries a nonverbal
semantic value, a ‘telling effect’ that ‘asserts, alleges, quests, requests, and implies …’.”
Therefore, according to Floyd, “Signifyin(g) connects its user with the roots of black culture.”
He defines signifyin(g) further in his article “Ring Shout!”

Musical Signifyin(g) is not the same, simply, as the borrowing and restating of pre-
existing material, or even the simple reworking of pre-existing material. While it is all of
these, what makes it different from simple borrowing, varying, or reworking is its
transformation of such material by using it rhetorically or figuratively—through troping,
in other words—by trifling with, teasing, or censuring it in some way (Wentworth and
Flexman 1960; Major 1970). Signifyin(g) is also a way of demonstrating respect for,
goading, or poking fun at a musical style, process, or practice through parody, pastiche,
implication, indirection, humor, tone- or word- play, the illusions of speech or narration,
and other troping mechanisms. As Gates (1988, 48, 49) puts it, “To Signify…is to
engage in certain rhetorical games…through the free play of associative rhetorical and
semantic relations.” It “luxuriates…in free play.” Signifyin(g) shows, among other
things, either reverence or irreverence toward previously stated musical statements and
values.

Just as Ratner and Agawu interpret classical topics, these tropes can be considered topics of
black musical traits. The following figure is a short list of black musical topics or tropes
followed by brief definitions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1: Universe of Black Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call and Response</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


96.

51 Floyd, “Ring Shout!,” 271.
Call and response is a term used to “describe the responsorial or antiphonal nature of African song performance—i.e. the alternation of solo passages and choral refrains or of two different choral passages.” As Reisser points out, antiphonal patterns occur in all genres of Afro-American music in patterns that include “solo call-group response, solo call-solo response, and group call-group response.” Figure 2.1, a portion of the spiritual “Go down, Moses,” illustrates the solo call-group response.

![Call and Response, “Go down, Moses”](image)

**Figure 2.1:** Call and Response, “Go down, Moses”

The use of repetition is a common element in most African-American music. It can occur by repeating “the same rhythms, words, harmonies, and sentences many times over before breaking away at some climactic point.” Repetition may be found on levels from the smallest details to the largest structural components. Figure 2.2 illustrates the use of repetition in rhythms and text. One of the more frequent uses of repetition in black music is the recurrence of short rhythmic or melodic patterns or riffs.

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Some-times I feel like a mo-ther-less chile.  

Some-times I feel like a mo-ther-less chile.  

Far, far-a-way from home a long, long ways from home. Then I get down on my knees an’ pray. 

Get down on my knees an’ pray.

Figure 2.2: Repetition, “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Chile”

Riff is a term used to describe a relatively short repeated figure which may or may not change its pitch location to conform to the changing harmonies. Schuller defines a riff as a “relatively short phrase that is repeated over a changing chord pattern, originally as a background device, although it later came to be used as foreground material in the so-called riff tunes.”

Tom Piazza gives another description of this term, “short, repeated phrases whose main function is to create forward rhythmic momentum. Often, riffs are also used behind soloists, to build excitement or to vary the texture.” Kernfeld adds that a riff is a “catchy, strongly rhythmic

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56 Schuller, Early Jazz, 48.

fragment of melody or harmony that is repeated.” Kernfeld maintains that this device is “widespread in African-American music.” Figure 2.3 is taken from Sammy Nestico’s *Hay Burner*. It illustrates a riff, played in the trombones and followed by a slightly altered version in the trumpets, which helps propel the piece to its final statement of the chorus.

**Figure 2.3:** Riff, Sammy Nestico’s *Hay Burner*, mm 99-105

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A blue note is a “microtonally lowered third, seventh, or (less commonly) fifth degree of the diatonic scale, common in blues, jazz, and related musics.”\textsuperscript{60} The origin of which is speculated to have come from the “difficulty in adapting West African pentatonicism to European diatonicism experienced by the American slaves.”\textsuperscript{61} A few scholars include an inflection of the sixth as a blue note as well.\textsuperscript{62} When blue notes are added to a diatonic scale, the resulting scale is a blues scale. Figure 2.4 provides a construction of a blues scale as outlined by Eileen Southern in \textit{The Music of Black Americans}.\textsuperscript{63}

![Blues Scale Diagram](image)

\textbf{Figure 2.4:} Blues Scale

While this example represents one construction of the blues scale, as Reisser points out, “scholars fail to agree about which scale steps qualify as ‘blue’ notes,” so it stands to reason that they “do not agree upon the construction and spelling of the ‘blues’ scale.”\textsuperscript{64} Figure 2.5 provides three other possible fabrications of the blues scale as developed by Gunther Schuller, David Baker and Jeff Titon.

\textsuperscript{60} J. Bradford Robinson and Barry Kernfeld: “Blue note (i),” \textit{Grove Music Online} ed. L. Macy (Accessed 7 April 2006) \(<http://www.groemusic.com.proxy.lib.fsu.edu>\)

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Reisser, “Compositional Techniques,” 112.

\textsuperscript{63} Southern, \textit{The Music of Black Americans}, 334.

\textsuperscript{64} Reisser, “Compositional Techniques,” 113.
A technique which is directly related to the idea of blue notes is modal mixture. It is combining both major and minor scales with the same key center within the same song. Hildred Roach states that, “While a great majority [of spirituals] could be analyzed within a major mode, they could also include both minor or modal scales simultaneously.” The propensity to include modal mixture in songs may also be due to the tendency of avoiding modulation in black music.

Modulation is very seldom practiced in black music. David Evans found that one of the tendencies “in black American folk music is a lack of modulation and often a disinterest in key changes.” Reisser expounds on black music lacking modulations stating that in certain genres, “which modulation plays a role, the number of key changes is limited to one or two.”

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Schuller has also noted that the tendency of Afro-American and African melodic phrases is to shift around a central tone.\footnote{Schuller, Early Jazz, 49-50.}

Elisions occur when one musical phrase ending dually acts as the beginning of the next phrase. Floyd describes the signifying effects of elision in black music in the following manner: “when performers of gospel music begin a new phrase while the other musicians are only completing the old one, they may be Signifyin(g) on what is occurring and what is to come through implication and anticipation.”\footnote{Floyd, “Ring Shout!,” 272.} Figure 2.6 shows an elision in Schumann’s “Nachtlied,” Op. 96, No. 1.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Nachtlied.png}
\end{figure}

Syncopation, according to Winthrop Sargeant, is essentially “the upsetting of a normal rhythmic pulse by the appearance of a stress on a weak beat while the following strong beat is
deprived of such a stress.”^72 Syncopations are used frequently in jazz and blues. Brooks points out that, “While the accents in melodies of pre-twentieth-century European music tend to fall on either the upbeat or downbeat, melodic accents in American Black music may occur at various other points.”^73 Peter Townsend while discussing jazz music describes it as the “displacement of an expected stress to an unexpected place.” He continues by stating how it is used in jazz. “In jazz this can mean displacement to the theoretically ‘weak’ beats of the bar, or its placement between the beats.”^74 Figure 2.7 is an illustration of syncopation.

![Syncopation](image)

**Figure 2.7:** Syncopation, from *Run Mary Run*^75

The gapped scale, a common black musical scale that can be traced back to Africa, is a major or minor scale with either one or two notes missing. One of the most common gapped scales is the pentatonic scale, a five-note scale that includes the set of black keys on the piano.

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In order to differentiate between a gapped scale missing one note and the scale missing two, I shall refer to the six-tone scale (missing one note) as the gapped scale because the five-note scale is most commonly identified as the pentatonic scale. In his book *Negro Folk Music U.S.A.*, Harold Courlander comments that one of four surviving scales that were probably brought from Africa is the natural minor scale without the sixth.\(^{76}\) Figure 2.8 illustrates both a gapped scale and a pentatonic scale.

![Gapped and Pentatonic Scales](image)

**Figure 2.8**: Gapped and Pentatonic Scales

The gapped scale represented in the example is constructed in the manner in which Courlander describes. The pentatonic scale seen in the example is one of several different constructions. The three most common formations of the pentatonic scale occur when the intervals of the scale conform to one of the following formats: 1) M2-M2-mi3-M2, which is provided in the example above, 2) M2-M2-mi2-M2, or 3) mi3-M2-M2-mi3. The following example, Figure 2.9 provides the remaining two possible constructions of the pentatonic scale.

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Figure 2.9: Pentatonic Scales

Stratification may be identified as layering of textures of music, from overlapping call-and-response to timbre, register, and tonality. Lee Cronbach stated that “the purpose of vertical stratification is the simultaneous separation and unification of different elements of a composition, and the creation of dynamic tension between the different vertical strata.”\(^7\) He states that polystylistic is one means to this end, though not the only conceivable method.

My critical analysis will explore the interaction of styles used by Still, Price, and Dawson by focusing on traditional forms of musical analysis as well as incorporating a semiological model for the language of Afro-American music. In so doing, my goal is to create a fusion of semiotic analytical styles based on the writings by Tarasti, Ratner, Agawu, and Floyd. Price, Still, and Dawson were trained in the western art-music tradition, and thus a complete view of the interaction of western and Afro-American elements cannot be produced through purely semiotic means. Therefore I will also include a traditional formal analysis, which will provide a basic outline of the pieces, and voice-leading graphs which will not only show traditional harmonic and melodic aspects of the music, but also help locate and illustrate many black characteristics that are incorporated into the music of these three composers.

CHAPTER 3
William Grant Still’s *Afro-American Symphony*

Introduction

The *Afro-American Symphony* was written in 1930. Because it incorporates many blues and jazz characteristics, Orin Moe concluded that it is more feasible to “approach this work as a blues-dominated symphony rather than symphonically dominated blues.” Among the black qualities that are heard within this symphony are blue notes, extended chords, pentatonic scales, and dominant-sounding tonic and subdominant chords. One of the most notable components is the use of the blues scale, which is prominently utilized throughout the symphony. By incorporating blues scales into his work, Still was afforded the use of extended harmonic chords, including flat-ninths, sharp-elevenths, and flat-thirteenth as well as others. Figure 3.1 displays the construction of three of these chords.

![Extended Chords](image)

**Figure 3.1:** Construction of Extended Chords

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While the use of chord extensions is abundant, one of the more perplexing harmonic issues in this symphony is the use of the minor seventh interval on tonic harmonies, effectively creating a secondary-dominant seventh of the subdominant, but functioning like a syntactically correct “tonic.” With this in mind, harmonies within the blues “incorporated certain unstable pitches found in African-American vocal music, the so-called blue notes, as part of dominant seventh structures built on subdominant and tonic chords.”

Barry Kernfeld describes this very phenomenon in his book *What to Listen for in Jazz* in his discussion of *Tin Roof Blues*:

From the downbeat of bar 1, the basic sonority is not a triad but a tonic seventh chord, I₇, which could also be spelled and heard as a secondary dominant, V₇ of IV. In Bb, the key of *Tin Roof Blues*, I₇ would be spelled Bb-D-F-Ab. The chord V₇ of IV, built on the dominant (Bb) of the subdominant (Eb), would also be spelled Bb-D-F-Ab. The notations “I₇” and “V₇ of IV” spell the same chord (Bb-D-F-Ab), but with two different functions, and in this piece, as in numerous other blues pieces, these two functions are at work simultaneously. *Tin Roof Blues* is obviously in Bb, but from the start that sound wants to push on to Eb; thus, another unstable element, along with chorus structure, energizes the blues form.

Figure 3.2 provides an illustration of a dominant seventh chord resolving to a tonic seventh chord, which is spelled with the same pitches as the following dominant seventh of subdominant chord that moves to a subdominant chord.

![Figure 3.2: Illustration of I₇ and V₇/IV](image)

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As the analysis will show, the harmonies of this work are not the only liberties taken by Still. The forms of the different movements also play an important role in distinguishing this work. The typical “Classical/Romantic” symphony consists of four movements. The forms of these movements generally follow the pattern of “(1) an extended opening movement, typically in sonata form, sometimes preceded by a slow introduction; (2) a lyrical slow movement, typically in sonata form, ABA, or theme and variations, (3) a dance-inspired scherzo movement, in triple metre; and (4) a fast finale.” Still himself comments on the forms he employed in the symphony.

When judged by the laws of musical form the Symphony is somewhat irregular. This irregularity is in my estimation justified since it has no ill effect on the proportional balance of the composition. Moreover, when one considers that an architect is free to design new forms of buildings, and bears in mind the freedom permitted creators in other fields of art, he can hardly deny a composer the privilege of altering established forms as long as the sense of proportion is justified.

Another intriguing aspect of the symphony is the inclusion of the tenor banjo in the third movement. This could be the first symphonic work to use this folk instrument. Robert Haas notes that both “Verna Arvey and William Grant Still are of the opinion that this is the first serious usage of this instrument….Mr. and Mrs. Still stated that they knew of no attempt to use the banjo in a major composition prior to 1930.”

**First Movement**

The first movement of the symphony (Moderato assai, *Longings*) is in an “irregular” Sonata form, as table 3.1 shows. Most forms rely on a basic underlying harmonic principle that guides the work. In the sonata form, the harmonies in a major key tend to follow the scheme of the primary theme on tonic. This theme is usually followed by a transition that modulates from

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the tonic key to a closely related key, commonly the dominant, as the secondary theme begins. Still, on the other hand, uses the key of Ab major as his tonic for the primary theme then modulates to a distantly related key of G major for the secondary theme, a minor second below the original tonic. While “exotic” key relations are more commonly heard in late- and post-Romantic symphonies, this key change is quite odd. This could be an attempt by Still to provide a subtle jazz relation to these two themes. In jazz there are several different ways to approach chords: diatonically, moving from a diatonic chord which is in the same key of the next chord, from a dominant, approaching a chord with a secondary dominant chord, or chromatically, in which all notes in the arrival chord are approached chromatically. I believe Still’s second theme represents a chromatic modulation, Figure 3.3.

### Table 3.1: Formal Outline, Still First Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on Primary theme</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>Ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exposition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme (Blues theme)</td>
<td>7-18</td>
<td>Ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blues Theme</td>
<td>19-30</td>
<td>Ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>30-32</td>
<td>Ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>33-44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>45-52</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variations of Secondary Theme</td>
<td>53-64</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation of Secondary Theme</td>
<td>65-67</td>
<td>Gm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>68-73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Blues theme</td>
<td>74-103</td>
<td>Abm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

84 For the reader unfamiliar with sonata form practice, the exposition normally consists of two main key areas and is usually divided into several thematic sections. The second key area is usually closely related to the first and is connected by transitional material. Once the second key area is established in the exposition, it normally does not return to the first key center. For a more detailed discussion of sonata form, see William Caplin’s *Classical Form* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
Table 3.1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<th>Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recapitulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>104-111</td>
<td>Abm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>112-115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blues Theme</td>
<td>116-127</td>
<td>Ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>128-129</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>130-136</td>
<td>Ab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.3: Chromatic movement from Ab major to G major

The movement begins with a solo English horn playing an introduction that is based on the primary theme of the movement. This lone voice may be portraying the loneliness, or longing, as the subtitle suggests, that is felt by the protagonist in the verse of Paul Laurence Dunbar’s poem, “Twell de Night is Pas’,” that accompanies this movement.

“All my life long twell de night has pas’
Let de wo’k come ez, it will,
So dat I fin’ you, my honey, at last’,
Somewhaih des ovah de hill.”[^85]

It quickly gives way to the Exposition that begins at measure 7 and the first statement of the primary theme, an original blues inspired theme composed by Still. This “blues” theme, as it is

known, occurs in various forms and guises throughout the symphony, and binds the work as a whole. It is depicted in Figure 3.4.

![Blues Theme](image)

**Figure 3.4:** “Blues” Theme, Still First Movement

Still later described the composition of this theme:

It was not until the depression struck that I went jobless long enough to let the Symphony take shape. In 1930, I rented a room in a quiet building not far from my home in New York, and began to work. I devised my own Blues theme (which appears in varied guises throughout the Symphony, as a unifying thread), planned the form, then wrote the entire melody. After that I worked out the harmonies, the various treatments of the theme, and the orchestrations.  

Perhaps to add credence to his blues theme, Still paired the melody with a traditional harmonic blues progression, the 12-bar blues. A standard twelve-bar blues progression refers to a “flexible, cyclic 12-bar structure, consisting of three four-bar phrases.” An illustration of this progression may be seen in Figure 3.5. Still’s blues theme and his slightly more elaborated twelve-bar blues progression follow in Figure 3.6.

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Figure 3.5: Standard twelve-bar Blues Progression

Figure 3.6: Still’s “Blues theme” with twelve-bar Blues Progression

This first statement, as well as the consequent statements of the blues theme, appears to be one measure short of the defined twelve measures. However, Ab is prolonged through the final bar of the blues progression therefore concluding the theme at its proper moment. A repetition of the
blues theme is heard immediately following this initial statement, which then elides into a linking section and ultimately to the transition which leads to the secondary theme and key. Figure 3.7 provides a voice-leading sketch of the first two statements of the blues theme, as well as the elision. Note, the underlying blues progression is notated underneath the sketch.

**Figure 3.7:** Voice-leading sketch, Still First Movement, mm 1-29

The portion of the *Ursatz* that is given in the previous example shows several other interesting events. First and foremost, the *Kopfton*, 5, is heard at the beginning of the introduction. Its supporting harmony, Ab, is not reached until measure 7 when the primary theme begins, however. After the establishment of this initial tone, the repetitive nature of the blues form becomes clear. First, within the two statements of the “blues” theme, a local form of the *Urlinie* is replicated two times, creating four total duplications helping to prolong the Eb, 5. The linear

88 In pentatonic scales either 4 or 2 are omitted. Therefore, in this and any subsequent sketch analyzing pentatonic scales, a beam will be used to indicate stepwise motion in pentatonic space.
descent begins with the reiteration of the Kopfton and moves down to 4 and then to the lowered third (b3). It is expected that 2 would follow, however the theme moves directly to 1.\textsuperscript{89} An Urlinie that does not include all scale degrees is uncommon in the European tradition. Nevertheless, as Sargeant observed, it is more commonly experienced in black American music:

In Negroid melody (as well as in all jazz, which here shows an important Negro influence) the final note of a tune is usually preceded from above (I) by the major or minor (blue) third; (2) by the major or minor third followed by the second; or from below, by sixth degree of the scale.\textsuperscript{90}

In Still’s theme, the last note of the melody is preceded by the blue third. The harmonies that support these linear descents are very similar (IV rather than IVb7). Again it is odd that 3 would be supported by a dominant in a western style sonata. It is a reasonable expansion of black musical tendencies that this blues inspired theme develops, as Sargeant describes:

The penultimate chord of the jazz cadence thus has to conform, harmonically, to the major or minor third, the second or the sixth degree of the scale. Of these tones, only the second harmonizes with the dominant triad or seventh-chord of European custom. This situation has brought about the use of a number of chords, uncommon in European cadences, which combine the Negroid melodic characteristics of the blues scale with the appropriate feeling of finality.\textsuperscript{91}

At this point it will prove useful to view the most common cadence chords in jazz as observed by Sargeant, Figure 3.8.

\textsuperscript{89} For a more detailed discussion on “gapped lines” in voice-leading sketches, see Justin London and Ronald Rodman’s, “Musical Genre and Schenkerian Analysis,” \textit{Journal of Music Theory} 42, no. 1 (spring 1998), 101-124.


\textsuperscript{91} Sargeant, \textit{Jazz: Hot and Hybrid}, 204.
Figure 3.8: Sargeant’s Jazz Cadences

With the exception of the sixth and tenth cadence, the authentic and plagal cadences of the European tradition respectively, all these cadences were adapted for use in the blues scale. The fifth cadence of this example shows that $b^3$, much like that seen in the analysis of the blues theme, is in fact commonly supported by dominant harmony in the blues idiom. Cadence four, the enharmonic equivalent of the fifth cadence, will also be seen in the upcoming analysis of the secondary theme.

The secondary theme begins in measure 45 in the key of G major. This 8-bar phrase is divided into an initial 2+2 unit, followed by a 1+1+2 division, suggesting an 8-bar sentence, as Figure 3.9 illustrates.

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92 Sargeant, *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid*, 204.
Figure 3.9: Secondary theme, Still First Movement, mm 45-52

Though it appears that each of these phrases is well defined at the surface level, at a higher level, the two phrases elide into one another as the following analysis (Figure 3.10) indicates.

Figure 3.10: Voice-leading sketch, Still First Movement, mm 44-52

In measure 48 moving into measure 49 the D is structural and sounds through both measures creating the elision. It also functions as the starting pitch of a descending 5-line within the secondary theme and key. When compared to the blues theme descents, signifyin(g) by way of imitation can be observed. This is a common characteristic as Floyd notes, “In African-American music, musical figures Signify by commenting on other musical figures, on
themselves, on performances of other music, on other performances of the same piece, and on completely new works of music."\textsuperscript{93} First and perhaps the most significant similarity between the two halves of the phrase is the chord progression. The only noticeable difference in the two is the inversions of the chords. By using the same chords, though in different keys, Still keeps the harmony simple. Another comparison that can be made is the use of the lowered third in the descent. As with the primary theme’s descent, b3 is supported by a dominant harmony. One big difference that can be seen is the inclusion of the second scale degree. It may have been included at this point to provide contrast as well as indicate a new signifyin(g) event of delaying the resolution to the tonic.

After the initial statement of the secondary theme, Still begins varying the antecedent phrase first in the violins at measure 53, followed by the flutes in measure 57. After these brief variations, he once again presents the antecedent phrase in its original form, measure 61, only to repeat it varied once more in the harp at measure 65 in the key of G minor. While the secondary theme plays an important functional role in the traditional form, the four bar variations on the secondary theme perform a significant role in the jazz idiom. The passing around of the four bar initial phrase in different instruments may be considered as the jazz pattern known as “fours.” Fours is a technique in which “improvisers trade four-bar patterns in constant alternation or rotation.”\textsuperscript{94} After the chorus of fours, Still moves to the development portion of the movement through a transition which is in the key of G minor. While mode mixture is a common black musical technique, changing to the key of G minor plays another important role; it allows Still to chromatically modulate to the new key of the development, Ab minor.

The development section of this movement is of an odd variety. Most works that incorporate a development do so in at least two ways: 1) they develop fragments of the theme(s) or motive and 2) they move in and out of various keys. The development that Still composed for this movement is peculiar in that it begins in the key of Ab minor (the minor tonic) and never deviates from it. He does, however, develop a small rhythmic fragment of the blues theme. The fragment is passed back and forth in a call and response style from violin to horn, creating a developmental theme with an antecedent and consequent phrase, shown as Figure 3.11.

\textsuperscript{93} Floyd, \textit{The Power of Black Music}, 95.

After this eight measure call and response, the violins take control with a four measure variation of this motive, Figure 3.12, which is repeated and expanded through the remainder of the development, measure 103.

The development continues through measure 103 where it gives way to the recapitulation and the secondary theme.

The recapitulation begins in measure 104 in the key of Ab minor, the minor mode of the tonic key. This is odd because recapitulations traditionally begin in the original key. It also begins with the secondary theme, which might at first seem out of the ordinary. However, though it is more common to hear the first theme of the movement followed by the second in the recapitulation, Rosen points out there are many instances of recapitulation occurring in “reverse or mirror form.”
...we find it in Mozart’s Violin Sonata in D major, K. 306 (1778); in the great quartet no. 21 of *Idomeneo* (1780; and in the Symphony in C major, K. 338 (also 1780). Haydn uses it in the finale of Symphony no. 44 in E minor (ca. 1772) and Clementi in his Sonata in G major, op. 39 no. 2 (1798).\(^95\)

By reversing the order of the themes in the recapitulation, Still is able to resolve the harmonic issue of modal mixture that was established in the transition leading into the development. By maintaining the key of Ab minor as the secondary theme is heard, the link, measures 112-115, makes a modal shift to Ab major, thus allowing the primary theme to be heard in the original key.

Still creates extra emphasis on the blues theme—signifying it by delaying its arrival—by using this “mirror image” recapitulation. The primary theme and its twelve-bar blues progression are heard only one time in the recapitulation, allowing the blues theme to be the last theme heard in the movement. The importance placed on this final statement due to its positioning, allows for the recognition of the blues theme throughout the remaining movements of the symphony.

**Second Movement**

The second movement, Adagio subtitled *Sorrows*, of Still’s symphony is a relatively short one (only 74 measures), which as the subtitle suggests depicts anguish. However, this grief does not give in to despair but pushes toward a hopeful desire of redemption. This sentiment is expressed in the accompanying text, stated in the front of the score, taken from a Paul Laurence Dunbar poem, “W’en I Get’s Home”:

> “It’s moughty tiehsome layin’ ‘roun’  
> Dis sorrer-laden earfly groun’,  
> An’ oftentimes I thinks, thinks I  
> ‘Twould be a sweet t’ing des to die  
> An’ go ‘long home.”\(^96\)

The poem may provide a little insight into the workings of the movement. Still begins the piece with a homophonic texture with a single voice melody over block chords. Composing in this manner gives the movement a hymn-like feeling. By emphasizing the blues, not only with

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harmony but also in the form, Still is able to interject a feeling of sorrow, which is also the subtitle of this movement.

From a thematic standpoint, this movement may be considered to be in a rondo form (ABA’CA). The A section is comprised of measures 7-28 and presents the primary theme twice. That is followed by the secondary theme, also heard twice, which constitutes the B portion of the song. The return of the primary theme immediately follows though it is shortened by four measures. This is followed by the shortened primary theme A’. At the conclusion of this shortened version of the A section, two measures of linking material is followed by a largely developmental section, C, which makes use of fragments, as well as an altered version of the primary theme. This section is followed by the return of the primary theme and a short coda based on the introductory theme. Table 3.2 provides an outline of this form for this movement.

### Table 3.2: Formal Outline, Still Second Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Event</strong></th>
<th><strong>Measures</strong></th>
<th><strong>Key(s)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Theme</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>F major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>15-22</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential Extension</td>
<td>22-23</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition (based on introduction)</td>
<td>24-28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>28-31</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>32-35</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A’</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation of Prime Theme</td>
<td>36-39</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>40-41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Key(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Primary Theme</td>
<td>42-45</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition (preparing F minor)</td>
<td>46-47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Prime Theme</td>
<td>48-55</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition (preparing F major)</td>
<td>56-57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>58-65</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>66-67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied Introductory Theme</td>
<td>67-74</td>
<td>F major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this style of formal description is helpful in distinguishing the themes and developmental areas of the piece, designating it as a rondo form ignores the obvious lack of harmonic support for a typical rondo design. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the lack of modulation is a common black musical element. However, Still compensates for this lack of modulation by incorporating mode mixture into the piece, which is another familiar black musical technique. Perhaps this is Still’s way of referring to the underlying blues structure.

There are several jazz and blues forms, as Barry Kernfeld points out in his book *What to Listen for in Jazz*. He discusses the 12-bar blues, which was seen in the analysis of the first movement of this symphony, as well as others that include chorus form, repeating chorus form, and popular song form. The latter of these forms best describes the one that Still uses in this movement. Kernfeld states:

In jazz, the term *song form* refers to formal models borrowed from American popular songs of the 1920s to 1940s. Structurally, this body of music differs from ragtime, blues, country, bluegrass, western, rhythm and blues, rock and roll, rock, soul, Motown, funk, disco, rap, and the like, in its almost singular use of 32-bar chord progressions. Such a formula offered, alongside the blues progression, a perfect vehicle for building jazz choruses. Of the various models, the most common one subdivides into four 8-bar phrases, in the pattern *aaba.*

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This movement lends itself well to the 32-bar popular song form, though Still alters it slightly by truncating the last statement of the primary theme, as table 3.3 illustrates. This is not entirely unexpected as Tom Piazza indicates, “there is no single form for the popular song; the classic American popular songs of the 1920s through the 1940s, which formed the basis of so much jazz even into the 1950s and 1960s, do not follow one strict formal pattern; they are marked, at their best, by extraordinary variety.”

Table 3.3: 32-bar popular song form, Still Second Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Number of Measures</th>
<th>Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Theme</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>F major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chorus</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>15-22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential Extension</td>
<td>22-23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>24-28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>28-31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>32-35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>a’</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied Primary Theme</td>
<td>36-39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
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<tr>
<td>(rhythms and length)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>40-41</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improvisatory Section</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of PT</td>
<td>42-45</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>46-47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of PT</td>
<td>48-55</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>F major/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>56-57</td>
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<td></td>
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98 Piazza, *Understanding Jazz*, 76.
Table 3.3 continued

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Measures</th>
<th>Number of Measures</th>
<th>Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Return of Primary Theme</strong></td>
<td>58-65</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fmajor/minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coda</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied Introduction</td>
<td>67-74</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>F major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(length and chords)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The movement begins with a six-measure introduction and moves into the chorus section of the tune. The chorus provides the first statement of the primary theme, which is then repeated. After a short cadential extension, a five-measure break is followed by the statement of the secondary theme and its repetition. A break is a “sort of bridge-passage that is tacked on to the end of a melodic phrase, filling out the dead interval that elapses between the final cadence of this phrase and the beginning of the following phrase.”  

99 At this point, the chorus returns though it is a varied version of the primary theme, of which only half is performed. The shortened verse provides a smooth ending to the chorus though it cuts the 32-bar form short by four measures. The seemingly cut off ending of the chorus may be explained by Kernfeld’s words on ending a chorus form.

The forward push of chorus forms explains the heavy reliance of jazz on abrupt, tentative, awkward, corny, nebulous, and dissonant endings: by its very nature, the chorus does not allow itself to end neatly.  

100 The piece resumes with an improvisatory section which follows a two-measure break. This section is so called because of the developmental aspects of these measures. Piazzolla noted that jazz performances of popular songs “resemble jazz performances of the blues in that they usually consist of a series of improvised variations taken, in turn, by whichever members of the band are designated to take solos.”  

101 Like many improvised sections, this part of the movement develops the primary melody/theme. Once the improvisational section concludes, the movement links

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99 Sargeant, Jazz Hot and Hybrid, 238.

100 Kernfeld, What to Listen for in Jazz, 43.

101 Piazzolla, Understanding Jazz, 77.
back to the primary theme before ending with a short coda. Examining the form in this manner shows Still’s prowess in the concept of signifyin(g), saying one thing and meaning another. Though the movement thematically fits the rondo style, it really should be thought of as a 32-bar blues.

The introduction presents the analyst with a most intriguing problem as the voice-leading analysis indicates (Figure 3.13) it does not start on the tonic chord. This in itself is not a big problem, for introductions often do not start on the tonic chord instead they generate harmonic and melodic interest by creating an initial assent leading up to the Kopfion.

**Figure 3.13:** Voice-leading sketch, Still Second Movement, mm 1-46
The problem arises as Still uses a series of dominant seventh chords throughout the introduction, none of which is the dominant seventh of the key. This projects an uncertainty of key, as well as distorting the initial assent, producing, in this case, a descent that leads into the initial tone. This progression of dominant seventh chords, as Allen Forte puts it in his book *The American Popular Ballad of the Golden Era 1924-1950*, is a chain of fifths, which is “an important means of progression in the American popular ballad.”\(^{102}\) This chord progression, at first glance, may be very perplexing, as Figure 3.14 shows.

![Chord Progression, Still Second Movement, mm 1-6](image)

**Figure 3.14:** Chord Progression, Still Second Movement, mm 1-6

However, it introduces the listener to a very important jazz/blues harmonic device, the tritone substitution. The tritone substitution is a means of replacing a dominant chord with another dominant chord that is a tritone away from the original. For a more precise definition it is helpful to turn to Ray Spencer who states in his book *The Piano Player’s Jazz Handbook*:

> Any two dominant seventh chords whose root notes are three whole tones apart can substitute for each other without jeopardizing harmonic rules….The substitute chord has two notes in common with the one it transposes. These notes, the major third and minor seventh, are intervals of an augmented fourth, a tritone.\(^{103}\)

Figure 3.15 demonstrates several instances of tritone substitutions.

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Figure 3.15: Tritone Substitutions

When looking at the strong beats of the first five measures of the introduction, it first appears as though the tritone substitution is used exclusively. Indeed it is apparent that all the chords that lead to the tonic are substitute chords, with the exception of the opening B-flat dominant seventh chord. The previous example provides an illustration of the substituted chords of measures 2-5. However, the only substituted chord is the Gb minor chord. Once the C chord was replaced, the preceding chords had to be changed to conform to the chain of fifths progression. Indeed the movement would take on an entirely different mood had Still chosen to use the diatonic dominant seventh chords. There may be some question as to how a minor chord constitutes a tritone substitution chord, when it has previously been defined as one dominant chord replacing another. Still exacts this substitution through the use of blue notes. The dominant chord in the key of F consists of the notes C, E, and G, scale degrees 5, 7, and 2 respectively. If Still chose to use the blue seventh scale degree within the dominant chord it would become minor, therefore its substitution will be minor as well. The tritone substitution plays an important role throughout the entire movement. Referring back to the voice-leading sketch, Figure 3.13, shows, the chain of fifths prolongs a plagal cadence that the opening Bb dominant seventh introduces. As Sargeant notes, the “Negro musician shows, for example, a distinct preference for the plagal
cadence, for pseudo-dominant seventh-chords on the subdominant, for the type of close harmony loosely termed ‘barber-shop,’ and so on.” By replacing chords with their tritone substitutions in this movement, Still may not only be signifyin(g) the “original” chord, but he could also be signifyin(g) both the jazz and blues idioms, because they are the mediums in which these chords are most commonly found.

Though several significant black musical devices have already been discussed, one of the most prevailing and noticeable techniques in this movement is the use of blue notes. This piece is in the key of F, though it is difficult to discern if it is major or minor due to the abundant use of the blue third. It may be easier to think of the piece as being in F-blues. The blues scale that most appropriately describes this movement follows the outline provided by Southern, as seen previously in Figure 2.4 (page 23), because it includes most if not all the alterations encountered, though some may be spelled enharmonically.

The movement begins with a six measure introduction that is based on the primary theme of the first movement, the “Blues” theme. Figure 3.16 shows both the “blues” theme and the introductory theme. As can be seen, the introductory theme comes straight from the bracketed portion of the blues theme. Though the rhythms are different, I have altered the shape of the note heads to help identify the augmentation and transposition of the “blues” theme. Imitation of this kind is a significant troping mechanism which plays an important role throughout the piece.

There are several other instances of this event, perhaps the most prominent being the secondary theme of the movement. The secondary theme derives its origin from the second measure of the blues theme as can be seen in Figure 3.17. The secondary theme is once again transposed, but the rhythm is very similar.

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104 Sargeant, *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid*, 156.
Figure 3.16: Blues theme and Introductory Theme, Still Second Movement

Figure 3.17: Blues Theme and Secondary Theme, Still Second Movement
Because of the lack of a tonic at the beginning of the movement, the initial tone becomes more evident as it not only appears as the first melody note of the primary theme, but also appears over one of the first tonic chords of the piece. The initial tone, 3, appears at m. 7 and begins a lower-level descent to 1 at measure 14. This low-level descent is giving the listener a glimpse of what is to come, for the background level of this movement is very similar to this descent. In fact, Still makes his intentions well known by immediately repeating the prime theme in a lower voice, and repeating the same low level descent.

It is not until the secondary theme is heard that more harmonic interest is achieved. It is at this point that Still hints at the key of F minor. However, this tension does not last long as the music returns to F major by moving through a bVI (Db) to bII (Gb) to I (F major) for the repeat of the secondary theme. It is at this point another foreshadowing occurs; this theme is the first utterance of an arpeggiated neighbor motion that moves from the primary tone A to C down to Bb and then continues down to Ab before returning to the pitch A natural. This motion is heard once again in the improvisatory section of the movement, as Still tonicizes the key of F minor. Still then moves back to F major this time by arpeggiating the Db chord which leads to the dominant note C and to the final statement of the prime theme. The movement finally reaches its descent which concludes at measure 65. The piece ends much like it begins with a chain of fifths progression occupying the coda which is a recall of the introduction.

**Third Movement**

Still’s third movement (*Animato, Humor*) thematically follows the norm of what is expected of a third movement in a “classic” symphony. Third movements are usually written in a dance style, *scherzo*, which is typically written in a composite ternary form, with an internal section that is in rounded binary. Still stays true to the traditional ABA form, however, as in the previous movement, he strays from the expected tonal construction in this movement by remaining in the same key center throughout.

The appearance of the banjo in this movement (the first time in the symphony) helps define not only the dance, but also establishes African as well as black folk-music retentions. It is thought to be an African instrument which is used as an accompaniment to both singing and dancing. One early banjo was described by Benjamin Latrobe:

The most curious instrument, however, was a stringed instrument which no doubt was imported from Africa. On the top of the finger board was the rude figure of a man in a
sitting posture, & two pegs behind him to which the strings were fastened. The body was a calabash.105

Another account of a dance that was accompanied by the banjo was recalled by a spectator in 1833 after the capture of a wildcat.

When all was ready for the dance, one of them [the Negroes] tuned a large guitar, made from a calabash strung with cat-gut, and began to strum as on a Moorish mandolin. Another Negro overturned a brass pot normally used for milking, and struck on it a long drumroll that lost itself in the woods. Soon at a signal from the guitar player, the dance began: before long there was rapid stamping, the dancers striking their thighs and their hands in time, pirouetting by themselves, or stopping suddenly in a posture of surprise and pleasure; by and by a general circle was formed.106

The popularity of the banjo and its importance to black Americans during the nineteenth-century is further seen by the composition of Louis Moreau Gottschalk’s “Banjo,” op. 15, which he performed regularly at his concerts.107 Paul Smith stated that Gottschalk’s work provided “the most detailed and complete surviving contemporaneous record of mid-nineteenth-century African-American banjo music.”108

Still’s energetic tune may easily be envisioned as being performed with dancers in Congo Square while singing the Dunbar verse:

“An’ we’ll shout ouah halleluyahs,
On dat mighty reck’nin’ day.”109

The lively energy projected by this movement may also explain the very warm reception that it received in both Berlin and Budapest, as mentioned by Verna Arvey:


An audience in Berlin broke a twenty-year tradition to encore the Scherzo from this Symphony when Dr. Howard Hanson conducted it there; several years later, when Karl Krueger conducted it in Budapest, his audience did the same thing.\textsuperscript{110}

The introduction begins the movement with thematic material that will be exploited later in the transition. The harmony of Eb minor is sustained throughout the seven measures of the introduction, which has the effect of inferring two possible keys, Eb minor or Ab minor, due to the chord Eb minor being its minor v. However, as the first statement of the primary theme begins, the music suddenly shifts to the key of Ab major, as Table 3.4 details. The haziness of the opening measures lays the groundwork for the continued use of modal mixture that occurs throughout the entirety of the movement.

\textbf{Table 3.4:} Formal Outline, Still Third Movement

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Event} & \textbf{Measures} & \textbf{Key(s)} \\
\hline
\textbf{Introduction} & & \\
Introductory Theme & 1-7 & Abm \\
(based on transition) & & \\
\hline
\textbf{A} & & \\
Primary Theme (a) & 7-11 (antecedent) & Ab \\
& 11-15 (consequent) & \\
Secondary Theme (b) & 15-19 (antecedent) & Ab \\
& 19-23 (consequent) & \\
Primary Theme (a) & 23-27 (ant.) & Ab \\
& 27-31 (cons.) & \\
Transition & 31-46 & Ab major/minor \\
\hline
\textbf{B} & & \\
Development of Primary Theme & 46-58 & Ab major/minor \\
Retransition & 58-68 & Ab major/minor \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{110} Arvey, \textit{William Grant Still}, 23.
Table 3.4 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Key(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme (varied)</td>
<td>68-72 (ant.)</td>
<td>Ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72-76 (cons.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>76-80 (ant.)</td>
<td>Ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80-84 (cons.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme (varied)</td>
<td>87-91 (ant.)</td>
<td>Ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91-95 (cons.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>96-100</td>
<td>Ab major/minor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The primary theme (a) begins with the anacrusis into measure 8. Like the secondary theme of the first movement, the primary theme is divided into two groups of four measures with both an antecedent and consequent phrase, or call and response, as Figure 3.18 displays.

![Antecedent Phrase](image)

![Consequent Phrase](image)

**Figure 3.18**: Primary Theme (a), Still Third Movement, mm 7-15

As the voice-leading sketch of the primary theme shows (Figure 3.19) the fundamental line begins with the *Kopfton*, Eb.
A traditional diatonic (all scale degrees represented) five-line descent is heard in the call, however, Still is merely setting the stage for a parodical use of this progression. Literary theorist Linda Hutcheon defines parody:

Parody, then, in its ironic “trans-contextualization” and inversion, is repetition with a difference. A critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signaled by irony. But this irony can be playful as well as belittling; it can be critically constructive as well as destructive. The pleasure of parody’s irony comes not from humor in particular but from the degree of engagement of the reader in the intertextual “bouncing”…between complicity and distance.\(^{111}\)

In the response another descending five-line presents itself with one note missing, â. As was seen in the discussion of the first movement, fundamental lines of pentatonic melodies typically omit one scale step, usually â or ♭. As a result, this descent could be signifyin(g) the black musical tendency of composing a pentatonic theme through imitation. This melody provides another significant event, the first signs of parody. The notion of parody that Still infused within this theme could be a signifyin(g) component that includes composing black musical idioms within a white style, or it may go deeper and signify Still’s own circumstance of being a black composer writing in a black style which had to be acceptable to a white audience. This sentiment is still experienced today as clarinetist Don Byron emphasized:

There’s irony all over, irony everywhere…. It’s definitely that balance… between totally opposing aesthetics… the conflict between being serious and avant, and just playing swinging shit… a polar pulling between cleanliness and dirtiness, between knowing rules very well and breaking them. There’s a certain kind of pull between opposite impulses that you… see in any good black anything…. A certain kind of inventiveness outside of… what is acceptable. And I think that comes from being in the society in that role… just the fact that you’re not quite an accepted member of society gives you a certain distance from the way things usually go.\textsuperscript{112}

There has been some disagreement as to whether or not measures 15-23 constitute a secondary theme. In fact, Floyd has some reservations about Haas’s analysis of these measures, “What Haas [1975, 30] hears as a second theme I hear as a variation of the initial statement.”\textsuperscript{113} There is some validity to Floyd’s concerns, as can be seen in Figure 3.20.

![Antecedent Phrase](image)

![Consequent Phrase](image)

**Figure 3.20:** (Secondary (b)) Theme, Still Third Movement, mm 16-23

Like the previous theme (a) it is in two parts consisting of an antecedent and consequent phrase. It may also be noticed from the voice-leading sketch, Figure 3.21, that each half of the theme produces a fundamental five-line descent, which produces a false sense of variation.

\textsuperscript{112} Don Byron, interview with Ingrid Monson, 10 April 1989, in Monson, “Doubleness and Jazz Improvisation,” 291.

\textsuperscript{113} Floyd, “Ring Shout,” 283.
Like Haas, I believe that the rhythm, harmony, and melody are different enough to conclude that this is indeed a secondary theme. The harmony becomes a little more complex with the inclusion of secondary dominants and frequent changes; there are more subtle differences as well. Unlike the principle theme which achieved a dualism of the diatonic scale (presenting two descending lines one functioning as diatonic the other as pentatonic) to realize its black music underpinnings, the secondary theme embraces both the black traits of the blue seventh and the pentatonic scale.

The pitch class G may be a point of concern because it is not part of the Ab pentatonic scale; however, I believe this pitch is only a local diminution which does not affect the larger pentatonic structure. Interpreting the scale in this fashion helps reinforce the significance of the *Urlinie*. This argument may also be supported by the arpeggiated tonic chord. Each time that it occurs Gb is present. G natural only occurs if it is leading to Ab.

Immediately following this statement is the return of the primary theme in measure 23. It is passed between instruments; oboes playing the antecedent phrase while the consequent is heard in the flutes. The return of this theme rounds out the binary form of the A section closing this portion of the movement in the traditional manner.

The transition, like the introduction, moves the key center toward Ab minor, with the use of blue notes, b♭3 and b♭7, Cb and Gb respectively. The theme of the transition is rhythmically driving; played in unison by all sounding instruments in the first three measures outlining an Ab

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minor harmony. As the transition continues, the harmony becomes a little more active moving from Ab minor tonics to minor dominants and back as the rhythm becomes more frenzied within a call and response section. This exchange leads the movement into the development, which unexpectedly begins in the key of Ab major instead of the strongly tonicized key of Ab minor.

The development, like the previous movement, does not change key center. However, Still tends to change mode quite freely. The development is based on the primary theme and thus it can be used to show how freely he moves from the major to the minor mode, as Figure 3.22 indicates.

Figure 3.22: Development of Primary Theme, Still Third Movement, mm 47-58

While both modes of Ab can clearly be heard in the melody, Still complicates the issue with his choice of blues-inspired harmonies. The harmonic indications could be signifyin(g) the traditional formal idea of the development which commonly change key and mode. Still clearly demonstrates this by composing a series of dominant sevenths forming a chain of fifths progression, which, as discussed previously, is a common jazz and blues technique. By including such a progression, the piece sounds as if it is moving to a new key center before circling back to the original key, indicated on the voice-leading sketch, Figure 3.23.
**Figure 3.23:** Voice-leading sketch, Development, Still Third Movement, mm 47-58

It is now evident, from viewing the harmonies, that Still not only incorporates the black technique of mode mixture by changing mode quite freely, but also by combining the two modes. This occurs in measure 50 where the Ab-minor melody is within the Ab-major harmonization.

Another interesting observation that should be made regarding the development is the trading of two measure phrases, ultimately completing a consequent phrase based on the primary theme. Figure 3.22 illustrates that measures 46-50 and 50-54 complete an eight measure period. The antecedent is heard starting with the flutes and finishing with the oboes. This phrase is followed by the violins, which begin the consequent phrase, and is concluded by the English horn.

The initial eight measures are followed by yet another statement of the antecedent, in the violins, and consequent, by the clarinets in measures 54-58. These two phrases are unique, because they are complete phrases written in diminution. They could be signifyin(g) the primary form of four measure phrases by drawing attention to the fact that it is shorter in length. When the concept of diminution is realized, it helps explain what is occurring throughout this 12 measure development.

The trading of two-measure units may be signifyin(g) the jazz concept of fours, which was explained in the discussion of the first movement (pg. 40). It is made possible through the establishment of diminished phrasing. Just as the last four measures complete an original eight
measure statement, it is possible to shorten fours into “twos.” This concept is made stronger when Still returns to the A section.

After a nine-measure retransition based on the material from the transition, the A section is reestablished. Reinforcing the concept of twos in the development, Still returns with the technique of fours. The varied restatement of the primary theme is passed between the violins for the first four and to the flutes and oboes for the second. However, when the secondary theme returns it is played in what appears to be its original form in the violins only, but after closer inspection this proves to be false. Figure 3.24 provides voice-leading analysis of the final A section of the movement. It provides the analysis that is needed to uncover the deeply ironic nature of this movement.

![Voice-leading sketch, Final A, Still Third Movement, mm 69-100](image)

**Figure 3.24:** Voice-leading sketch, Final A, Still Third Movement, mm 69-100
As mentioned earlier, the repetition of the thematic material is varied, providing the first indication of Still’s underlying irony. In the original form, the first statement produced a full five-line descent; this later statement, however, generates a descent that arrives on b3, the blue third, and skips directly to 1. This reinforces the pentatonic nature Still was infusing within this movement. In fact, it produces a different form of the Ab pentatonic scale constructed in Figure 3.25. This is important because the restatement of the b section includes a scalar descent of both forms of the pentatonic scale. The antecedent phrase contains the natural third scale degree within the descent, while the consequent phrase incorporates the adapted scale.

![Ab Pentatonic Scale](image)

**Figure 3.25:** Ab Pentatonic Scale

As the final statement of the primary theme begins, the original form of the pentatonic scale takes control, with one exception, the blue third. This addition may suggest that though a few stressful relationships have mellowed within the races, some tension remains. At the conclusion of this final statement of the primary theme, Still continues in his ironic ways, once again obscuring the key by adding a five measure extension which moves from Ab minor to Ab major reestablishing the natural third. He could be signifying(g) his dual nature which is described in *The Souls of Black Folk* by W. E. B. Du Bois:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, [sic]—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.\(^{115}\)

Fourth Movement

Still’s fourth movement, *Aspirations*, ties the entire work together. Though it introduces a new theme, it reminisces on the earlier movements especially the blues theme. Still described this movement in the following manner:

The Fourth Movement is largely a retrospective viewing of the earlier movements with the exception of its principal theme. It is intended to give musical expression to the lines from Paul Laurence Dunbar which appear on the score.  

The verses that Still refers are from Dunbar’s poem *Ode to Ethiopia* and are as follows:

“Be proud, my Race, in mind and soul.  
Thy name is writ on Glory’s scroll  
In characters of fire.  
High mid the clouds of Fame’s bright sky  
Thy banner’s blazoned folds now fly,  
And truth shall lift them higher.”

This movement is dense from the beginning. One perplexing issue involves the formal arrangement of the movement, which has been described in several different manners. Haas describes the movement as a large piece that consists of several variations of the themes. Moe suggests that this movement is actually two songs, that form two separate movements, one slow and one fast. “Although Still numbers the movements as four, the aural evidence suggests five—two faster outer movements, with two slow movements surrounding a central scherzo.” Floyd hears the piece in yet another fashion, as a composition with “an extended troping coda that Signifies on the work as a whole, summing up the composer’s Signifyin(g) revisions of the romantic symphony and Afro-American folk song.” While Moe’s and Floyd’s arguments are intriguing, my perception of this movement (similar to Haas) is that it is in highly modified sonata rondo form. Table 3.5 illustrates my formal interpretation of this movement.

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119 Floyd, “Ring Shout!,” 284.
### Table 3.5: Formal Outline, Still Fourth Movement

**Sonata**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Key(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exposition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) Primary Theme</td>
<td>1-16</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied repetition</td>
<td>17-28</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(rhythm and transposition)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) Secondary Theme</td>
<td>29-32</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>33-36</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied repetition</td>
<td>37-40</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(rhythm)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat Varied repetition</td>
<td>41-44</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension/Link</td>
<td>45-46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Based on ST)</td>
<td>47-60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme 2</td>
<td>61-68</td>
<td>F min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation ST 2</td>
<td>69-76</td>
<td>F min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(rhythm, transposition, and melody)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation ST 2</td>
<td>77-91</td>
<td>F min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(rhythm, transposition, and melody)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retransition</strong></td>
<td>92-99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) Primary Theme</td>
<td>100-115</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied repetition</td>
<td>116-125</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(rhythm and transposition)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>126-131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Theme</td>
<td>132-135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(based on ST)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of DT</td>
<td>136-139</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>140-147</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Theme 2</td>
<td>148-156</td>
<td>C min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(based on PT)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Themes</td>
<td>159-181</td>
<td>B, G, C min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retransition</td>
<td>182-193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recapitulation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(A’) Variation of Primary Theme</td>
<td>194-208</td>
<td>F min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential Extension</td>
<td>209-219</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The formal sections of the rondo style are given in parenthesis beside the corresponding sonata elements.
The thematic material provides the basis for two other puzzling issues: length and key. The primary theme appears to last sixteen measures with an antecedent and consequent phrase, as shown in Figure 3.26.

![Figures showing antecedent and consequent themes]

**Figure 3.26:** Primary Theme, Still Fourth Movement, mm 1-16

However, measures 9-12 seem to be a reinterpretation of measures 5-8 with slightly altered rhythms and harmonic progression. These four measures (9-12) are interpolated leading into the closing four measures producing a 12 measure theme. Figure 3.27 presents the primary theme as it might look without the four additional measures.
Figure 3.27: 12 measure Primary Theme, Still Fourth Movement

The tonality of C# minor is quite evident in the melody of the primary theme. However, as Figure 3.28 shows, the harmonic progression that accompanies the melody calls into question the validity of the C# minor key center. The “nonfunctional” harmonic progression revealed by the Roman-numeral analysis demands a reevaluation of tonal center. The tonal center of E major is strongly suggested by the cadential activity, though not all of the melodic phrases are accompanied with harmonic cadences.

Beginning the movement in a tonally shifting manner could be signifyin(g) earlier movements, which utilized the same technique, as well as anticipating events that appear later in this movement. The dual nature of the key center and the theme may be seen in the following voice-leading graph, Figure 3.29.
Figure 3.28: Harmonized Primary Theme, Still Fourth Movement, mm 1-16
The graph illustrates a fifth progression that descends from the Kopfton, G, as indicated by the beamed notes. Another line is revealed within measures 8-13 if the key of C# minor is temporarily observed. This descending line begins on $\hat{5}$, which is poorly supported by a minor v chord, and continues down to $\hat{1}$ in measure 13 over stronger supporting harmonies. Approaching the melody in this manner is significant because the musical technique of elision may be seen to both begin and end this “hidden” linear descent obscuring the sectional divides of the theme. The timing of this descending line comes at an interesting point in the music as well. It falls within measures 9-12, the interpolated section of the theme, signifyin(g) the ambiguousness of the tonal center. After this initial “elongated” statement of the primary theme, Still repeats it with a slightly altered rhythm and a third higher. This time excluding the interpolated measures producing a twelve bar phrase.

The secondary theme begins at the conclusion of the second statement of the primary theme. It, like the first statement of the primary theme, is sixteen measures long and has four measures of interpolated material that is also augmented at the end. The secondary theme finishes with a two measure extension or link before a new section begins. This theme, which is based on the blues theme, is unusual in that it modulates to two different keys, a new key after each four measures beginning in A then moving to C and F respectively. Creating a theme in such a fashion adds to the uncertainty of key center that was established in the primary theme. Figure 3.30 illustrates the secondary theme.
This melody could not only be signifying the blues theme, but also the blues. It is evident by the blue notes that appear in each new key, blue 3rds in the first two phrases, 3rds and 7ths in the last. The following analytical sketch, Figure 3.31 provides an illustration of the significance these blue notes play.

Figure 3.30: Secondary Theme, Still Fourth Movement, mm 29-44

Figure 3.31: Voice-leading sketch, Still Fourth Movement, mm 29-39
Once the primary theme and secondary theme have been established, a pattern begins to emerge. This movement, like the second, disguises the true nature of the form. Referring back to Moe, this piece may be easier to conceive as a 12-bar blues song rather than a modified sonata. Kernfeld describes special instances of the 12-bar blues form which may have rhythmic and harmonic variations stating:

The most imaginative rhythmic variants occur…with the result that a steady 12 bars might be thrown out the window in favor of unpredictable, asymmetrical phrasing. The most imaginative harmonic variants occur in jazz, which almost always dresses up the basic progression. At the extreme, a jazz blues may layer two or three tiers of subsidiary progressions within the basic one. Far less often, it might also stretch out the 12 measures (usually to 16).121

Thomas Owens concurs that the “Blues as a structure is a melody based on the 12-bar Blues progression or upon a compressed (eight-bar) or expanded (16- or 24-bar) version of it.”122

Reconsidering the formal design of the primary theme, an asymmetrical division of the measures is formed in the following manner: 3 measures + 5 measures + (4 measures) + 4 measures. This pattern emerges because of the repeated harmonic progression (ostinato/riff) which moves from submediant to subdominant to supertonic seventh to dominant seventh to tonic in various guises. Figure 3.32 illustrates this 12-bar form with jazz chord symbols of Still’s primary theme. By fusing the blues form with the traditional sonata form, Still could be signifying both forms. He may also be signifying the first movement of the symphony, which was also in 12-bar blues form, as well as the second movement which was a disguised 32-bar blues form within a rondo pattern.


Figure 3.32: Primary theme with 12-bar blues progression, Still Fourth Movement

Just as the 12-bar pattern begins to be established, the introduction of a new theme restores a more traditional form. The new theme, secondary theme 2, is in the key of F minor and is based on the second half of the F major portion of the secondary melody. Therefore secondary theme 2 is signifying(g) the secondary theme through imitation. It is seven measures long with a one measure cadential extension, as shown in Figure 3.33.
Still repeats this initial statement with slightly altered pitches and rhythms. He also expands the length of the melody creating an asymmetrical phrase that includes both an antecedent and a consequent phrase that encompasses 23 measures. These phrases seem to destroy the extended 12-bar pattern that was just beginning to take shape. On the other hand, several of the measures in this section may be interpolated material, as was seen in the primary theme. The voice-leading graph, Figure 3.34, may help in determining the interpolated measures.

Figure 3.33: Secondary Theme 2, Still Fourth Movement, mm 61-68

Figure 3.34: Voice-leading sketch, Still Fourth Movement, mm 61-91
The graph indicates a portion of the theme that may be omitted. At measure 81, Still begins a tonic-chord prolongation that lasts seven measures. During this span, the melody has ornamented tonic arpeggiation. As the dashed line indicates, the music could resolve down to F after the half diminished seventh chord in measure 81 and then continue the arpeggio at measure 89 omitting the prolongation of the tonic. This interpretation suggests that these measures are an interpolation and therefore could be removed in the overall scheme. Without these “extra” measures the entire phrase would become 24 measures and preserve the extended 12-bar blues pattern, signifyin(g) the extended primary theme as well as the secondary theme by imitation.

The primary theme returns after a short seven measure retransition. Still completes the original 16 measure phrase before returning to the version that is a third higher, abruptly ending it two measures short on dominant harmony. At this point, the music changes both time signature and speed, moving to a new variation of the blues theme through a transition.

The new variation begins in the key of Ab major and is in the compound meter $\frac{6}{8}$. This is the beginning of the developmental/“improvisatory” section of the movement; therefore the new melody is referred to as the developmental theme, provided in Figure 3.35. It is eight measures in length and is passed between the flutes, oboes, and clarinets and is based on the secondary theme in both melody and modulation tendencies—changing key center after four measures. The key of E major is reached after the first four measure phrase.

**Figure 3.35:** Developmental Theme, Still Fourth Movement, mm 132-139
The similarities seen in the developmental theme and the secondary theme not only appear at the surface level, but they may also be seen at a more background level, as seen in Figure 3.36

![Voice-leading sketch, Developmental Theme, Still Fourth Movement, mm 132-139](image)

**Figure 3.36:** Voice-leading sketch, Developmental Theme, Still Fourth Movement, mm 132-139

It, like the secondary theme, produces a local form of a pentatonic *Urlinie* descent with a lowered third scale degree in each new key. The supporting harmonies are also alike. The one exception is the outlined arpeggio in the secondary theme within the additional four measure phrase.

After this initial call-and-response theme, a transition, whose melody is based on the two sixteenth eighth-note figure of the developmental theme chromatically descends coming to rest on a G dominant seventh chord which prepares for the arrival of the new key, C minor. A new theme is introduced that is loosely based on the primary theme, with a highly syncopated rhythm and slow harmonic progression. Since this theme is heard within the developmental area, it is referred to as developmental theme 2, which is provided in Figure 3.37.
This theme is similar to the primary theme in that it has both an antecedent and consequent phrase. Compared to the 12-bar form of the primary theme it is also formed by asymmetrical phrase grouping, 4 measures plus 5 measures. Still may be reincorporating the dual nature of the original theme which he started at the beginning of the movement. At the conclusion of this second developmental theme, Still begins developing them further. Altering the rhythms and combining the two themes, as well as changing the tonal center several times: from C minor to B major to G major and back to C minor before reaching the retransition.

The retransition uses the rhythmic material from the second developmental theme and changes chords every measure in a chromatic fashion, as was seen earlier in this movement. It prepares the movement for the return of the primary theme in the recapitulation.

Still’s recapitulation is awkward for a traditional sonata form in that the original theme does not return in its original form or key and it is much shorter. Though it is still recognizable, the primary theme is varied rhythmically due to the compound meter and returns in the key of F minor. This could be Still’s way to continue the ambiguousness of keys. It may also be signifyin(g) the earlier events of the movement. Recalling the exposition, the key of F minor directly preceded the return of the primary theme as well as the original tonic. Therefore, the recapitulation could be signifyin(g) the exposition through anticipation of the coming yet never reached key. By doing so, Still creates a desire or expectancy for something more to come perhaps signifyin(g) the hope and aspirations he has for the possibility of greater things to come.
CHAPTER 4
Florence Price’s E-minor Symphony

Florence Price’s E-minor symphony, like Still’s symphony, follows standard symphonic design. It contains four movements and is scored for the standard orchestra with the addition of several special percussion instruments, including large and small African drums, cathedral chimes, orchestral bells, and a whistle. Price also includes several other features in the symphony, which modify the traditional sound. She subtly infuses the traditional form with characteristically black musical techniques as well as including a traditional African-American dance, the Juba, as the third movement of the symphony, rather than a minuet and trio or scherzo.

First Movement

The first movement of Price’s E-minor Symphony might initially be perceived as a traditional Romantic sonata-allegro form. While the movement may clearly be sectioned into the three fundamental components of sonata form (exposition, development, and recapitulation) Price deviates slightly from the standard characteristics. As seen in Table 4.1, she includes a false entry of the primary theme and continues the development of the themes as in the beginning of the recapitulation.

Price’s work begins with a six-measure introduction which continues into the exposition in measures 7-116. The development and recapitulation follow in measures 117-230 and measures 231-300 respectively.
Table 4.1: Formal Outline, Price First Movement

**Sonata Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Theme</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exposition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme 1 (PT1)</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>11-14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT1</td>
<td>15-18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>19-22</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential Section</td>
<td>23-36</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT 1</td>
<td>37-40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>41-70</td>
<td>from E minor to G major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme 1 (ST1)</td>
<td>71-74</td>
<td>G major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST1</td>
<td>75-79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>G major (E minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retransition</td>
<td>85-116</td>
<td>G major → E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Themes</td>
<td>117-150</td>
<td>E minor → D major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>151-154</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>155-158</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Themes</td>
<td>159-166</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>167-170</td>
<td>G major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Cadential” Section (V7/V)</td>
<td>171-179</td>
<td>G major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Themes</td>
<td>180-189</td>
<td>G major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inversion of Themes</td>
<td>190-195</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Developmental” Theme</td>
<td>196-203</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retransition</td>
<td>203-230</td>
<td>C major → E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recapitulation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False Entry PT</td>
<td>231-232</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Themes</td>
<td>233-253</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>254-256</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential Extension</td>
<td>257-262</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Material</td>
<td>262-300</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Price’s introductory theme highlights a key feature of the symphony: the “gapped” scale, which may act as a signifyin(g) trope. In fact, Price uses the gapped and pentatonic scales in each of her three main themes of this movement: a gapped scale in the introductory theme, as just mentioned; a pentatonic scale in the primary theme of the exposition; and another pentatonic scale in the secondary theme of the exposition. Each theme and its corresponding scales are given in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1:** Themes and corresponding scales, Price First Movement

In viewing these themes and scales, other interesting signifyin(g) events may be apparent. The G-major pentatonic scale and the E-minor pentatonic scale use the same five pitches in a
different order. Therefore, the secondary theme could be considered to be signfying the primary theme by mimicking or “commenting” on it by rearranging the pitch order.

The themes utilize syncopated rhythms (indicated by the brackets) that could be considered tropes as well because of the high frequency of syncopated rhythms in black music, especially in blues and jazz. Syncopations are used heavily throughout the movement.

Though these events are significant, a more defining trope that occurs throughout the work is the use of call and response. In fact, the three themes themselves act as both “caller” and “respondent” when encountered at different points in the music, Figure 4.2.

**Figure 4.2:** Call and Response Themes, Price First Movement
The introductory theme is the opening “call.” It might appear as though the “response” comes from the first statement of the primary theme. The real response, however, is an altered repetition of the introductory theme, which is acting as a countersubject to the primary theme, therefore allowing the primary theme to be a call at its initial statement.

Price’s movement incorporates rudimentary chord progressions (i, V, i or i, subdominant, V, i), as the following voice-leading graph indicates, Figure 4.3.

**Figure 4.3:** Voice-leading sketch, Price First Movement, mm 1-56
This analysis uncovers a simplicity of underlying harmonic and tonal design, which are highly organized at the surface by long-range linear planning. This standard diatonic setting recalls earlier perceptions of Afro-American music that characterize the music as simple or lacking in harmony altogether. According to Tilford Brooks, “polyphony is preferred to a melody with harmonized accompaniment in the traditional sense. It also appears that varied rhythmic, tonal, and melodic interest are featured at the expense of traditional harmonic interest.”\textsuperscript{123} These chord progressions, as indicated in the voice-leading sketch, may be seen throughout both the introduction and exposition. The first—tonic, dominant, tonic—can be seen in the introduction beneath a descending 5 line, which could be a foreshadowing of the background \textit{Urbinie} of the entire movement. While this occurrence appears at the local level, this uncomplicated harmonic progression may be seen at a higher level in the exposition. The first four phrases in the exposition (mm 7-40) produce the same progression in the following manner: the first two phrases, both of the primary theme, arpeggiate the tonic E-minor triad (i); phrase 3, the cadential section, produces a sustaining dominant ninth arpeggiation (V); the final phrase of this progression returns to the primary theme, therefore, returning to the tonic (i).

At this point in the music (measure 41), Price’s harmonic language is intensified by chromaticism. It fuses a more European harmonic vocabulary within the context of the rudimentary progression. The last tonic acts as a starting point for the next progression that ends in measure 45, which creates a higher-level elision. The resulting chord progression moves from tonic, Neapolitan-sixth (functioning as the subdominant), cadential six-four, concluding at this point with a weak cadence before modulating to the secondary tonal area through a series of diminished seventh chords. The interaction between these European and Afro-American harmonies could be an attempt to return to the traditional sonata form.

Figure 4.3 highlights several other features of this movement. Price’s willingness to move around within a tonic arpeggio illustrates the importance of the key, and reflects the African trait to compose a song centered around a single pitch. Several instances of arpeggiation may be pointed out; one spans the length of the primary theme each time it is stated, another appears in the short link between the first and second statement of the primary theme. It is interesting to note that before the primary theme is restated, a five-line progression that first

appears to stop on 2, due to the added cadential section, completes its descent through octave displacement. This interpretation enhances the notion that the sonata form is altered, because the cadential section could be considered an interpolation. The addition of these measures delays the resolution. A possible signifying event, shown in Figure 4.3, is the overlapping of phrases or elision. Several instances can be pointed out on the local level: first, the introductory phrase concludes as the primary theme begins; second, the linking material elides with the cadential material at measure 23, and the cadential material closes as the primary theme is restated. One that may be more difficult to see is a higher-level elision. It occurs over the interpolated material, the 5 line descent closes as a new E minor arpeggio begins with the primary theme. This is indicated by the broken beam from measure 23-37. As will be seen in the discussion of the development, these are not the only occurrences of this trope.

The secondary tonal area is G major. It begins in measure 71 with the secondary theme, though its dominant pitch class (D) becomes important in driving the movement to the new key, as can be seen in Figure 4.4. The progression that controls this section is even more straightforward. The tonic chord, G, overshadows this section with a brief four-measure link on the mediant chord, E, before returning to tonic. Once again, Price places emphasis on the arpeggiated chord as the two statements of the secondary theme provide both an ascending and descending G major arpeggio. A final G arpeggio can be heard stretching from measures 80 to 88, which reaches up to the reiteration of the Kofpton within the retransition. The retransition returns the exposition to E minor after a short 10-6 linear intervallic pattern. The exposition begins its linear descent in measure 93 over yet another subdominant, dominant, tonic progression, which supports a new five-line progression.
Figure 4.4: Voice-leading sketch, Price First Movement, mm 57-116
Figure 4.4 continued

Though the exposition changes key in measure 71, an argument could be made that the secondary theme never really moved out of E minor pentatonic. This is because E minor pentatonic and G major pentatonic use the same exact five pitches (E, G, A, B, D) arranged in a different order. In measure 72 the arrangement of the notes could create harmonic or scalar confusion because Price’s ordering of the notes creates an E-minor pentatonic scale. The emphasis, however, is placed on the pitch G that is obtained by moving up from the D in the previous measure through the E and arriving on G. Price could have chosen to be tonally ambiguous in this section because she was trying to obscure the modulation or trying to continue her alteration of the traditional sonata form.

The development section begins at measure 117 through an elision of the final note of the descent of the middle ground Urtine of the exposition. Price’s development not only builds upon thematic material, as was seen in Still’s symphony, but also modulates. As noted, the key begins in E minor through an elision but quickly begins shifting, through a series of both the fragmented introductory and secondary themes, through the key of D major before reaching C major and a full statement of the secondary theme. This relatively stable statement of the secondary theme quickly gives way to A minor as the primary theme is heard once again. This shift between keys seems very sudden. However, the two keys are parallel and, with closer
inspection, it can be seen that the two are elided at a higher level. Figure 4.5 provides a voice-leading sketch of measures 151-158.

![Voice-leading sketch, Price First Movement, mm 151-158](image)

**Figure 4.5:** Voice-leading sketch, Price First Movement, mm 151-158

The example shows that within the C major, secondary theme section there is an A minor arpeggio in the melody which continues into the primary theme at measure 155. The shift into the new key area is further helped along by the structural pitch class E which is a common tone to both key areas. E is the cadential note of the secondary theme in C major as well as the first structural pitch class in the primary theme in A minor. All these elements combined create a seamless transition into the new key.

Within these few measures several possible signifyin(g) elements may be seen. First the restatement of the two themes (primary and secondary) may be signifyin(g) the original by appearing in a different key. Another instance of signifyin(g) occurs with the elision into the A minor key area as described above. Perhaps a more elusive instance is the anticipation of the A minor key within the key of C major. This signifyin(g) event takes place where the arpeggiated A minor chord is heard; whereas the harmony progresses toward the key of A minor, the melody has already reached it.

After the initial statement of the primary theme in A minor, Price begins what appears to be a repeated statement of the primary theme. However, before the completed theme is realized another incomplete statement interrupts it and begins moving the piece to yet another key, G major.
At this point, measure 167, the complete primary theme is heard once again. It is interesting to note that, with the exception of the beginning and ending notes, the primary theme is written with exactly the same pitches as the original statement of the primary theme, as can be seen in Figure 4.6.

![Primary Theme E minor](image)

**Primary Theme E minor**

**mm 7-10**

![Primary Theme G major](image)

**Primary Theme G major**

**mm 167-170**

**Figure 4.6:** E minor and G major primary theme (mm 7-10 and 167-170), Price First Movement

The example provides both the original E minor primary theme as well as the theme in G major. This example indicates that the primary theme is ambiguous by its ability to function, with the adaptation of the beginning and ending pitches, within two different tonal centers. It also shows that Price may have chosen to shift the music around a central theme rather than a central tone. This slight alteration of the theme is a comment upon or is an imitation of the original and therefore it could be a signifying(g) event.

Once again Price seems to be making a transition into a new key area by using sequential statements of the altered primary theme. However after examination at a deeper level, this sequential pattern indicates a linear expansion of the underlying secondary dominant (V7/V)
until it reaches measure 179. This recalls the linear dominant ninth that was heard earlier in the exposition (mm 23-36) and could be a signifin(g) event. In measure 179 the seventh of the chord, G, is attained and immediately reaches up to 5 of the key. It is here that an interpolated descending five line in the key of G may be seen spanning to measure 186. Figure 4.7 is a graph of measures 167-186. It shows the primary theme from measures 167-170. The dashed lines indicate the linear expansion of V7/V (A, C#, E, G), which concludes at measure 179. The descending five-line is also indicated by parenthetical scale degrees.

![Figure 4.7: Voice-leading sketch, Price First Movement, mm 167-186](image)

Once the cadence is reached at measure 186, Price includes a short cadential extension before moving away from the key of G. After the extension, Price seems to return to the key of E minor. The chord progression at this point is a dominant seventh of E minor, to vii7, to tonic. She also includes the incomplete primary theme, this time in inversion, which helps emphasize
this section. But like the exposition, measures 80-85, this is a brief tonicization before moving back into the key of C.

The development of the new key area continues with a variation of the second theme in inversion, which is followed immediately by the inverted primary theme. This in effect creates a new eight measure theme, Figure 4.8, with an antecedent and consequent phrase or another instance of a call and response trope which could also be signifyin(g) the two themes through imitation.

![Development Theme, Price First Movement, mm 196-203](image)

**Figure 4.8:** Development Theme, Price First Movement, mm 196-203

At the conclusion of this theme, another elision occurs as two measures of the primary theme, the first measure in its original form and the second in inverted form, begin the retransition at measure 203, at which point the harmonic motion begins to slow ultimately coming to rest on a dominant seventh of E minor in measure 223 where it remains until the recapitulation begins in measure 231, which is announced by the resolution of the dominant seventh to an E minor chord and the apparent return of the primary theme. However, this is a false return of the primary theme, perhaps signifyin(g) it through anticipation. This may also be a reference to the delayed arrival of ̂ in the five-line descent in the exposition.

The full primary theme returns beginning in measure 254, the only complete statement in the recapitulation which then gives way to a closing section where variations of the different themes (mostly the primary) are heard. Because the movement closes with primary thematic
material, its linear motion produces another series of arpeggations, Figure 4.9. Therefore the background level fundamental line does not descend instead it remains on the Kopfion, perhaps creating a linear elision into the following movement which begins in the key of E major.

*Figure 4.9:* Voice-leading sketch, Price First Movement, mm 231-300
Second Movement

Price’s second movement, Largo, shows her continued interest in the fusion of the traditional Romantic symphony with black musical characteristics. In the traditional sense, this movement is slow and is in composite ternary form, a three-part form in which one of the sections contains another recognizable form. Price may have composed in this form because of her experience playing and writing for keyboard instruments, especially the piano. Composite ternary form, “was a popular vehicle in the nineteenth century for character pieces written for the piano by Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47), Chopin, Brahms, and many other composers…”¹²⁴ Ternary form customarily changes from the tonic key in the first section, A, into the dominant or submediant key in the second, B, through a transition. The music then moves back to the tonic key and the return of the A section through a retransition. This style is extremely common in symphonic works. Price’s deviation from the typical sequence of the symphony is by no means her only alteration to the form, as Table 4.2 illustrates.

### Table 4.2: Formal Outline, Price Second Movement

#### Composite Ternary Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Key(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link (based on b)</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’</td>
<td>8-12</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a”</td>
<td>15-23</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>23-27</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>28-29</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’</td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition to b</td>
<td>35-43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>44-62</td>
<td>C# minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>63-67</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>68-69</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’</td>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>75-76</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a”</td>
<td>77-84</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>90-91</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transition to B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on a</td>
<td>92-138</td>
<td>E,A,C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme based on b</td>
<td>139-155</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>156-163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme b</td>
<td>163-178</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retransition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>210-214</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>215-216</td>
<td>(C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’</td>
<td>217-221</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>222-223</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a”</td>
<td>224-232</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>232-236</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>237-238</td>
<td>(C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’</td>
<td>239-243</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>244-247</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpolation</td>
<td>246-253</td>
<td>(C, 2 mm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(based on a)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’ (varied)</td>
<td>254-258</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential extension</td>
<td>259-266</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As with the first movement, this movement’s melody is composed using a pentatonic scale, E major. The melody (a) is harmonized in a homophonic, hymn-style fashion, is 5 measures long, and is followed by two measures of important linking material, Figure 4.10. After this initial statement both the melody, in a varied fashion (a’), and the link are repeated. The following phrase could easily be perceived as being new material. The rhythm is quite recognizable, however, and the only evident changes are the melody: a fifth higher over a differing chord progression. Therefore, it is not changed enough to be called anything rather than a varied repetition of the hymn theme (a”), which may be signifying(g) the original not only through repetition, but through imitation. After another repetition of the a and a’ phrases, an extended link begins the transition to the b section.

Figure 4.10: Hymn theme with link, Price Second Movement, mm 1-7
The b phrase, which is based on the linking material, is in the key of C# minor. Because this phrase is repeated (using repeat signs), it preserves the symmetry of the previous repeated sections.

Figure 4.11 is a voice-leading sketch of the A section, which provides a clear illustration of the repetitive nature of the piece.

**Figure 4.11:** Voice-leading sketch, Price Second Movement A section, mm 1-91
Figure 4.11 continued

The lower level five-line progression replicates the fundamental descent and is heard many times in this section. The Kopfion, \( \hat{5} \), occurs in measure 1 over the tonic note E. Beginning in measure 3 the five-note descent appears over a tonic, predominant, dominant, tonic chord progression. Other occurrences happen in measures 8-12, 24-27, and 30-34, as well as many others throughout the movement. The repetitive nature of this movement emulates a spiritual. Other
parallels to the spiritual may be seen as well. According to Paul Oliver a typical form of many spirituals is “an alternating line and refrain which permitted endless extemporization.” The form, ABA, corresponds to that of verse-and-refrain form which is common in many Afro-American spirituals. In fact, this entire movement is based on two main themes, the primary theme (a) or the “verse” and the linking material on which the b theme, “refrain,” is based which can be seen in Figure 4.12.

![Figure 4.12: a and b themes and link, Price Second Movement](image)

Viewing this movement as a spiritual also helps to define the call-and-response trope that is present throughout this movement. Price seems inclined to follow the verse-refrain spiritual outline by not only separating or following the individual “a” sections (verses) with the linking material (refrain), but also by following the A section with the same refrain material as outlined in Table 4.3.

---

### Table 4.3: Formal Outline, Verse-Refrain form, Price Second Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Key(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (Verse)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a—Verse</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link—Refrain</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’—Verse</td>
<td>8-12</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link—Refrain</td>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a”—Verse</td>
<td>15-23</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a—Verse</td>
<td>23-27</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link—Refrain</td>
<td>28-29</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’—Verse</td>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition to b</td>
<td>35-43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b (based on Link)—Refrain</td>
<td>44-62</td>
<td>C# minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a—Verse</td>
<td>63-67</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link—Refrain</td>
<td>68-69</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’—Verse</td>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link—Refrain</td>
<td>75-76</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a”—Verse</td>
<td>77-84</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a—Verse</td>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link—Refrain</td>
<td>90-91</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transition to B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on a(Verse)</td>
<td>92-138</td>
<td>E,A,C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (Refrain)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme based on b—Refrain</td>
<td>139-155</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>156-163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme b</td>
<td>163-178</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retransition</strong></td>
<td>178-209</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (Verse)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a—Verse</td>
<td>210-214</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link—Refrain</td>
<td>215-216</td>
<td>(C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’—Verse</td>
<td>217-221</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link—Refrain</td>
<td>222-223</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a”—Verse</td>
<td>224-232</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a—Verse</td>
<td>232-236</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link—Refrain</td>
<td>237-238</td>
<td>(C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’—Verse</td>
<td>239-243</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link—Refrain</td>
<td>244-247</td>
<td>(C# minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpolation (Verse)</td>
<td>246-253</td>
<td>(C, 2 mm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(based on a)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a’ (varied)—Verse</td>
<td>254-258</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential extension</td>
<td>259-266</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

96
In so doing, Price could be signifyin(g) the spiritual form on both a local and higher level. It may also be seen that signifyin(g) by using the call-and-response technique is occurring not only in this section, but also the entire movement. Each verse/a theme is the call and each link or b theme/refrain is the response.

Another way Price could be signifyin(g) the spiritual is through the use of “hollers.” Portia K. Maultsby states that when “slaves and free blacks attended camp meetings and later conducted their own religious services, they changed the character of the ritual by freely interjecting verbal (‘Yes, Glory’, ‘Lord! sweet Lord’, ‘Hallelujah’, ‘Oh, Lord’ and ‘Ha! ha!’).” Oliver confirms that black spirituals have “interpolated cries of ‘Glory!’ and other words or phrases of encouragement or affirmation.” Since the linking material is only two measures long, it could be considered a “verbal interjection” to the overall (ABA) verse and refrain form.

The analysis also shows the continued use of simple harmonic progressions—tonic, predominant, dominant, tonic—which strengthens the argument that this piece was written with the spiritual in mind, because spirituals were customarily performed with simple harmonies.

Perhaps the most intriguing element that may be seen in the graph is a missing scale degree in the fundamental line. The lack of 4 in the descent can clearly be seen in the local-level five-line descent. While at first this omitted note may be troubling, after further examination, the missing scale degree may be explained in a couple of different manners. The first explanation refers to the gapped construction of the pentatonic scale, as was the case in the Still symphony (Chapter 3). In the case of the E major pentatonic, those two missing notes are 4 and 7, A and D# respectively.

While this is a perfectly good explanation of why 4 may be missing from the Uirlirie, there is another possibility here. Schuller points this out in Early Jazz when he quotes Winthrop Sargeant. Schuller states that:

…it in the blues recordings he [Sargeant] studied ‘the fourth degree [of the scale] is the least used tone of the tetrachord, and for that matter, the least used tone of the entire scale.’ This corresponds entirely to a similar treatment of the subdominant in African melody. Sargeant goes on to comment that ‘when it [the fourth degree] is found it


usually has the humble place of an incidental passing tone, a practice not unknown in African music.¹²⁸

The second portion of the movement is quite elusive in both its key and starting point. The B section begins in measure 139, after a lengthy transition. There may be some question about the B portion starting at this point, however. The transition is quite tricky; it begins at measure 92 and moves through several dominant and diminished seventh chords on the way to a new key, as seen in Figure 4.13. Price, however, complicates the issue by using a fully-diminished-seventh chord that could be read in two different fashions: B fully-diminished seventh or G# fully-diminished seventh, again resisting a fixed tonal center. Indeed, she resolves the chord to both the key of A and eventually to C major. The resolution to A is only a pseudo-arrival and acts as a VI, a deceptive resolution to the ultimate goal of C. Price, however, has not stopped her “trickster” ways. When the movement arrives on C major in measure 119, the listener may be inclined to think the new section has finally arrived. She achieves this deception by using a fragmented portion of the verse. It is quickly realized, however, that this is a false entrance of the B section because, almost as rapidly as Price establishes the key of C, she begins to move away from it, again using different types of seventh chords, possibly signifying(g) the true B section through anticipation. When Price finally arrives at the new section, measure 139, she does so with another twist. Measures 137 and 138, the last two measures on the graph, clearly outline a C dominant seventh, which prepares for the key of F. However, through the use of a common tone, E (the original key center), she completes the transition and moves into the key of G and the B section which is based on the b theme or linking material. This lengthy transitional phrase could be signifying(g) the B section by delaying its arrival. It may also be signifying(g) the key center of F by strongly emphasizing it through its dominant seventh and ultimately avoiding it as the B section begins. It is also interesting to note that F is the b⁷ or the blue seventh in the key of G conceivably signifying(g) the blues.

Figure 4.13: Voice-leading sketch, Price Second Movement Transition, mm 92-138

The B section presents several interesting characteristics, which can be seen in Figure 4.14. It contains several local level five-line descents, which could be signifying the melodic lines of the A section in the fact that they are supported by tonic, predominant, dominant, tonic
chord progressions, and are missing \( \frac{4}{4} \). E minor is strongly emphasized, as evidenced by the voice exchanges that appear in measures 156 and 157, and 160 and 161. It creates ambiguousness of key center and recalls the secondary theme of the first movement where a strong tonicization of E minor was heard within the G major section. Therefore it could be signifyin(g) the secondary theme of the first movement.

**Figure 4.14:** Voice-leading sketch, Price Second Movement B section, mm 139-198
The final local descent of the section is heard in measures 170-178. However, the last note of the "Urlinie" is not supported by the tonic; instead the hanging C dominant seventh of measure 137 at the start of this section is resolved creating an elision to the retransition which follows.

After a retransitional section, which is largely composed of fully and half diminished seventh chords followed by a few measures of dominant harmonies, the A section returns, Figure 4.15. The final A section presents the listener with two complete restatements of the a and a’ themes. The a” is only heard once in its entirety. This may be because Price has one last trick to play on the audience. Where a” is expected to be repeated a second time, Price includes an interpolated section, which could be signifyin(g) the key relationship of a third, C major/bVI, of the transition. Reisser has pointed out that many black melodies and songs include a preponderance of motions of thirds. While many instances of this motion are heard throughout the piece at the local level, I think Price elevated the technique by incorporating it to include third motions of key centers; as seen here, in the transition, and from the return of A from the B section.

Many black musical traits and instances of signifyin(g) may be heard in this movement from call-and-response to pentatonic scales. But perhaps the greatest signifyin(g) event happens through the fusion of the ternary and the spiritual forms. Spirituals were commonly used by slaves to pass on codified messages, as Frederick Douglass pointed out in his book The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass:

A keen observer might have detected in our repeated singing of “O Canaan, sweet Canaan, I am bound for the land of Canaan” something more than a hope of reaching heaven. We meant to reach the North, and the North was our Canaan.129

Price’s audience (most likely educated whites) may have recognized the form of the movement as ternary unaware of the coexistence with the verse-and-refrain form of the spiritual. Therefore, she may have been signifyin(g) them in much the same way as true spirituals were songs of coded protests of the slaves.

129 Frederick Douglass, The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass (Hartford: 1892), 157, quoted in Paul Oliver, African-American Spirituals, 193.
Figure 4.15: Voice-leading sketch, Price Second Movement, mm 199-266
Third Movement, “Juba Dance”

Price once again shows her desire to fuse Western influences with that of black traditions by including an African dance, “Juba Dance,” as her third movement. The juba dance was originally a sacred African dance called “Djouba” or “giouba.” As the dance moved from Africa to the United States, it became a secular dance that incorporated lively and rhythmic group dancing that may have been related to the ring shout as Katherine Dunham notes:

In its original African form, the Juba or Jumba or Majumba, as it is called in the West Indies, is primarily a competitive dance of skill. One person steps forward in the circle of dancers and begins exhibiting his skill, whereupon he is joined by a member of the opposite sex who joins him in this exhibition. The people in the circle may rotate for a certain number of measures, or may remain stationary, all the while clapping rhythmically and encouraging the competitors with song and verse.130

It consisted of “a mix of European jigs, reel steps, clog dances with African Rhythms thrown in, becoming popular in the Minstrel Circuit around 1845.”131

The Juba dance or “pattin’ juba” was observed and commented on by many people during the nineteenth-century. One being the poet Beverly Tucker who in a letter to Edgar Allan Poe wrote:

The beat is capriciously irregular; there is no attempt to keep time to all the notes, but then it comes so pat & so distinct that the cadence is never lost….Such irregularities are like rests and grace notes. They must be so managed as neither to hasten or retard the beat. The time of the bar must be the same, no matter how many notes are in it.132

Another observation came from Sidney Lanier in which he explored the rhythm of the Juba dance while discussing the functionality of pauses found in poetry.

I have heard a Southern plantation “hand,” in “patting Juba” for a comrade to dance by, venture upon quite complex successions of rhythm, not hesitating to syncopate, to change the rhythmic accent for a moment, or to indulge in other highly-specialized variations of the current rhythmus. Here music … is in its rudest form, consisting of rhythm alone; for


132 Beverly Tucker, as quoted in Dena J. Epstein, Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 142.
the patting is done with hands and feet, and of course no change of pitch or of tone-color is possible.\textsuperscript{133}

According to Sterling Eisminger, the Juba is a “dance of Southern plantation blacks.”\textsuperscript{134} A much more detailed explanation of the Juba dance or step is given by Marshall and Jean Stearns in which they described it as:

\begin{quote}
\textit{going around in a circle with one foot raised—a sort of eccentric shuffle—and it is danced by the surrounding circle of men before and after each performance of the two men in the center. Both the words and the steps are in call-and-response form. ... The two men in the center start the performance with the Juba step while the surrounding men clap, and then switch to whatever new step is named in the call, just before the response “Juba! Juba! sounds and the entire circle starts moving again.}\textsuperscript{135}
\end{quote}

Though it has been seen that Price’s symphony is composed and refers to several black elements and musical tropes, this is her first explicit acknowledgement in the symphony that Black-American musical and cultural devices are involved in the creation of this symphony. Price comments on the importance of the Juba in her works when commenting on her Third Symphony.

\begin{quote}
In all of my works which have been done in the sonata form with Negroid idiom I have incorporated a juba as one of the several movements because it seems to me to be no more impossible to conceive of Negroid music devoid of the spiritualistic theme on the one hand than strongly syncopated rhythms of the juba on the other.\textsuperscript{136}
\end{quote}

Price’s Juba dance movement of this symphony is in a modified rondo form, as Table 4.4 indicates. Here again the traditional standards of the form are being tested by Price. Traditionally, the A section returns after every episode or contrasting section of the music. The

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[]\textsuperscript{134} Sterling Eisminger, “Etymology Unknown: The Crème de la Crème de la Crème,” \textit{American Speech} 59, no. 1 (spring, 1984): 91.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
form is altered in this movement by moving immediately into a developmental section after the second episode (C).

**Table 4.4:** Formal Outline, Price Third Movement “Juba”

### Rondo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>9-16</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>17-24</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>25-32</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>33-40</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>41-48</td>
<td>A minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>49-56</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a and b</td>
<td>57-64</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>65-72</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>73-80</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>81-89</td>
<td>E major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>89-96</td>
<td>E major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>118-125</td>
<td>C major</td>
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<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>126-133</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>134-141</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>142-148</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coda</strong></td>
<td>148-190</td>
<td>C major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The A section of the piece is in two distinct parts. The first sixteen measures, which are in A minor, present an energetic syncopated 8 measure motive, \( a \), performed by the violins, that is repeated depicted in Figure 4.16.
Figure 4.16: *a* theme, Price Third Movement, mm 1-8

Taking into account the march like “oom-pah” bass on 1 and 5, the harmony of this repeated phrase is quite simple. In fact, the harmony of the entire 16 measures expands tonic through the minor v that occurs beneath the anacrusis of each statement of the theme, as Figure 4.17 illustrates.
**Figure 4.17:** Voice-leading sketch, Price Third Movement, mm 1-16

The dashed lines outline the A minor arpeggio that arises within the melody of the a-theme. This lively theme may evoke the tunes of antebellum fiddlers. One such melody, *Roaring River* is given in Figure 4.18.

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**Figure 4.18:** *Roaring River,* “Fiddle tune(?)”

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137 Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (Auburn, New York: Derby and Miller, 1853), 337, in Epstein, *Sinful Tunes,* 151. Epstein states that this tune is described as being accompanied by patting.
The last 16 measures of the A section is in the key of C major. It also consists of a new eight measure theme, $b$, that is repeated, Figure 4.19. Though the theme is not as rhythmically complicated, it maintains its utilization of syncopation. The oom-pah bass is still evident within this section, but, the harmony does pick up intensity by incorporating subdominant and dominant chords.

Figure 4.19: $b$ theme, Price Third Movement, mm 17-24
The B section or first episode presents a new theme, \( c \), that returns to the key of A minor, Figure 4.20. Like the first two themes, it consists of 8 measures which are repeated.

**Figure 4.20:** \( c \) theme, Price Third Movement, mm 33-40

Price introduces a new instrument to the symphony within this theme, the wind whistle (performed by a slide whistle today). While the inclusion of the whistle provides new interest to the movement, it is rather curious to include it at this point in the symphony. I have found no evidence or research that indicates the association of the wind whistle in black oral traditions.
However, the use of the whistle in this movement is very significant. Whistling was common among slaves, whether during their free time in the evenings or while they worked. J. Alexander Patten described the whistling of the blacks in Lynchburg, Virginia in the *New York Mercury* in 1859:

> Of course, there is a very large negro population in Lynchburg…when not asleep [in the evening they] keep up a continual whistling. All along the streets, come the note of this boy-beloved music….The Lynchburg blacks…whistle in a manner well calculated to “soothe the savage breast.” It is the tunes of the plantations where they were born, and hope to die; of the factories, where the song lightens their labor; and each is given with an accuracy, and even sweetness, which the instrument cannot always achieve. The negroes stand with their backs to the palings and walls, their hands in their pockets, and …whistle away the evening hours. Other gangs pass, whistling their loudest and best, which incites the first to displays of their fullest capacity; and thus the concert goes on. At an early hour, however, the whistling is hushed.…

Whistling was also performed at dances if no other instrument was available. William Cullen Bryant noted that the music provided at one dance that he saw in South Carolina in 1843 was performed by “whistling, and beating time with two sticks upon the floor.”139 By incorporating the wind whistle into this movement, Price is mimicking the black musical trait of whistling, particularly the whistling associated with dance.

As can be seen in the example, the syncopated rhythm is still present. It may also be noticed that this theme is rhythmically similar to both the a and b themes. It becomes evident, when comparing the rhythms of the three themes, that the c theme combines rhythmic elements of the previous two themes for its melody. The rhythmic reduction of the three themes may be seen in Figure 4.21. By mimicking or incorporating the previous two themes, the c-theme is signfyin(g) them.

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At the conclusion of the B section, the A section is repeated. This time however, it occurs in the key of C major. Interestingly the b-theme enters early. The early arrival does not effect the restatement of the a-theme. In fact, it illustrates the bipartite nature of the themes as well as the keys.

The second episode begins once the repeat of A concludes. Here Price moves away from the keys of C major and A minor beginning in the key of E major. It is interesting to note that the key centers exhibit third relationships. It is even more fascinating that these keys are an arpeggiation of the original tonic (A, C, E), which was emphasized in the a-theme (Figure 4.16).

The theme of this sixteen measure section restates c in a varied form. While the first statement of this theme consisted of a repeated eight measure period, the restatement of the melody is expanded and forms one sixteen measure period. In so doing, it places added emphasis on the theme and therefore could be signifying the original organization of the c theme.
The development begins immediately following the C section. It develops not only the b- and c-themes, but also the key. The two themes are played separately as well as together once again showing the similarities they possess with one another. The key of the development moves from Eb major to G major ultimately heading into Ab major before shifting back to C major for the final statement of the A section.

The return of the A section begins after the developmental portion of the movement in measure 118. It might be expected that the key of A minor would return as well. It is unusual to find a single theme that is harmonically stable in two different key centers without changing any pitches. However, Price makes use of the commonalities of the pentatonic scales and achieves this phenomenon by returning to the key of C major. The a-theme, therefore, has lost some of its original identity by now focusing its fundamental line toward C instead of A. However, it can be seen in the last measure, that the theme never totally loses its uniqueness. It is in this measure that A minor sneaks back to the forefront, if only for a brief time, illustrated in Figure 4.22. This two key “complex” is not without precedence, as Robert Bailey exhibits in his analysis of Wagner’s *Tristan*. He states:

The new feature in *Tristan* with the most far-reaching consequences for large-scale organization is the pairing together of two tonalities a minor 3rd apart in such a way as to form a “double-tonic complex.” The pairing of A and C for the whole of Act I may well have grown out of the traditional close relationship between A minor and C major, but the double-tonic idea goes well beyond merely beginning in a minor key and concluding in its relative major, as in Chopin’s Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, and his F-minor Fantaisie, Op. 49. In some ways, the new concept plays upon that very closeness, but we are now dealing with the “chromatic” mode of A and the “chromatic” mode of C. The two elements are linked together in such a way that either triad can serve as the local representative of the tonic complex.\(^{140}\)

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Figure 4.22: Varied a theme, Price Third Movement, mm 118-125

However, this significant point in the movement may have deeper significance. Just as the use of the whistle signified whistling among blacks, I believe this could be signifyin(g) the fact that like the slaves, or even Price herself, that identity may be taken away.

The a-theme in its original form represents the slaves and their music. The b-theme then will symbolize the slave owners’ music. That being done, the c-theme corresponds to the fusion
of the two, much like spirituals. The development may denote the tension between the two groups as well as the struggle to be free. The return of the a-theme may characterize the freedom that was gained, though still in a time of discrimination. The conclusion of the a-theme in A minor could then epitomize the struggle to remain free and to gain total freedom.

**Fourth Movement**

Price’s fourth movement returns the symphony to E minor. It also maintains the fast rhythmic tempo that was established in the third movement. Since this is the final movement, Price reestablishes the connection that all the movements have with one another through key relationships.

The form of final movements of symphonies in the Western tradition is frequently rondo. As Wallace Berry points out in *Form in Music*, “It (rondo form) occurs commonly as the final movement of a multimovement work—symphony, sonata, chamber piece, concerto.”¹⁴¹ He goes on to say that the “sonata-rondo is confined almost exclusively to final movements in sonatas, chamber works, symphonies, and concertos.”¹⁴² Price, however, adapts the traditional standard composing this movement in a modified rondo form by presenting only a portion of the A section upon each return, as seen in Table 4.5.

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**Table 4.5:** Formal Outline, Price Fourth Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rondo</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Key(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>a theme (repeated)</td>
<td>1-16</td>
<td>E minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b theme</td>
<td>18-33</td>
<td>E min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a theme</td>
<td>19-49</td>
<td>E min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>c theme (repeated)</td>
<td>50-57</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


¹⁴² Ibid., 203.
Table 4.5 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Key(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>a theme</td>
<td>59-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>d theme</td>
<td>75-105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>transition</td>
<td>106-110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e theme</td>
<td>111-160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>retransition</td>
<td>161-168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>a theme</td>
<td>169-184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coda

The a theme consists of a sixteen measure double period that ascends and descends in a triplet pattern in e natural minor, which is supported by a relatively simple harmonic progression displayed in Figure 4.23. While this melody clearly displays the key of E natural minor, the voice-leading analysis, Figure 4.24, shows that the melody progresses pentatonically.

The linear motion indicated in the graph represents what has been established earlier as a pentatonic descent. It begins on 5, moving linearly to the tonic pitch and omitting 2. However, what really draws attention to this descent is the absence of the dominant harmony. Here, Price may not only be signifying the pentatonic scale, but also may be giving significance once again to the spiritual, which commonly contains plagal cadences. The final descent in the example further emphasizes the plagal cadence by progressing from a subdominant functioning French-augmented-sixth-chord, omitting the dominant and instead resolving to a tonic six-four and finally closing with a root position tonic in the first ending, indicated in Figure 4.25, but moves directly to tonic in the second ending.
Figure 4.23: a theme, Price Fourth Movement, mm 1-16
Figure 4.24: Voice-leading sketch, Price Fourth Movement a, mm 1-16

Figure 4.25: Cadential Resolution of a theme, Price Fourth Movement, mm 15-16
The $b$ theme begins at measure 18, Figure 4.26. and could be signifyin(g) the main theme through imitation because of the similarities of rhythm. The harmonic progression of this sixteen measure repeated period is simple, alternating between root position and first inversion tonic chords until reaching a plagal cadence.

Figure 4.26: $b$ theme, Price Fourth Movement, mm 18-25
This theme, while melodically less complicated, helps reinforce the natural minor scale. It also gives more credence to the plagal cadence as a weakly supported full five-line descent occurs over a tonic, subdominant, tonic chord progression, Figure 4.27. At the conclusion of this melody the main theme returns and helps prepare for the upcoming episode, B, by incorporating a series of fully- and half-diminished-seventh chords into the last eight measure phrase.

Figure 4.27: Voice-leading sketch, Price Fourth Movement, mm 18-25

The B section or episode begins in G major pentatonic with the start of the theme (c), Figure 4.28, which, like a, is repeated. The two key centers, E minor and G pentatonic, recall the keys of the exposition in the first movement of this symphony; therefore Price could be signifying(g) the earlier movement.
The rhythm, like the $b$ theme before it, is very similar to the $a$ theme, Figure 4.29. In fact, it is a compilation of the rhythms of the previous themes and therefore could be signifyin(g) them through imitation.

It was observed earlier that the key relationships of these themes are identical to the first movement. The linear analysis of $c$, Figure 4.30, shows another similarity, ambiguousness of
key center. The melody clearly arpeggiates an E minor seventh chord as the harmony firmly establishes a G major progression.

![Image of musical notation]

**Figure 4.30:** Voice-leading sketch, Price Fourth Movement, mm 50-57

The C episode of this movement is unique in that it introduces two new themes that have several similarities. The first theme (e) is eight-measures long and is a modulatory melody that begins in the key of C major and ends in E minor. Like the preceding melodies, it is very similar in rhythmic structure and begins a repetition. However, the harmonic progression and melody are altered creating a transition that leads to a new key and restatement of the theme, Figure 4.31. This melody moves from the key of E minor into Eb major, at which point a false entrance of the theme is heard before finally reaching G major, as the original melodic material returns.
Figure 4.31: \textit{d} theme and transition, Price Fourth Movement, mm 75-95

Following the final statement of this theme a four-measure link is elided into before the first statement of the \textit{e} theme which is first heard in the key of C major. Like \textit{d}, this melody consists of an antecedent and consequent phrase. However, the length of the two phrases is eight measures, creating a 16 measure period, as Figure 4.32 illustrates.
Figure 4.32: e theme and transition, Price Fourth Movement, mm 111-135
The similarities of the two themes in this episode are quite apparent. Though e is longer than its predecessor, both melodies are modulatory; they are each followed by a transition that alters the key center modulating to the same keys, though in a slightly different order: e arriving in G major before moving to Eb major when a variation of the theme returns. Since the e theme has many things in common with d, it could be signifyin(g) it through imitation. The tonal centers of this episode also reinforce the black musical concept of motion by thirds, perhaps signifyin(g) the earlier movements of this symphony that did the same thing.

The harmonic progression, Figure 4.33, that supports the variation is very stable repeating the same chords over and over. It is heard six times and starts a seventh, but Price modulates back to E minor to prepare for the return of the A section. Although the length of this melody is not standard nor is b7 a normal blues note, the ostinato bass line is reminiscent of a traditional 12- or 32-bar blues form and the lowered second (circled in Figure 4.32) acts as blues note and is in fact b7 of the original tonic.

![Figure 4.33: Variation of e theme, Price Fourth Movement, mm 145-160](image-url)
The final statement, measure 153, progresses as the others before it. The introduction of a B-dominant-seventh chord within this statement may not make sense at first. It is however, the dominant seventh of E minor which is ultimately the goal when A returns. At a deeper level, Price could again be signifyin(g) jazz through the technique of the tritone substitution with the B dominant seventh chord substituting for the F minor chord that is expected to follow.

After eight measures of retransition, the scalar a theme returns as the final A section begins. The 16-measure melody is played in its entirety before starting what appears to be a repeat. At this point, however, Price begins an extended coda that varies the scalar pattern of both the antecedent and consequent phrases, which sequentially help drive the piece to the end. Measure 244 begins an intriguing variation, Figure 4.34, which could be signifyin(g) the original theme through imitation, only in retrograde form.

![Retrograde theme, Price Fourth Movement, mm 244-246](image)

**Figure 4.34:** Retrograde theme, Price Fourth Movement, mm 244-246

The piece climaxes with a final *tutti prestissimo* section that is again a variation of the main scalar theme, this time including a raised seventh scale degree. Fashioning the end of this movement in such a manner could be signifyin(g) the excitement and intensity that was generated by black participants at the conclusions of dances and shouts. The exhilaration that is felt by members involved in such dances is very keenly described by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a colonel of the first black regiment to be called into service during the Civil War. Higginson writes in his diary entry dated 3 December 1862 that:
…from a neighboring campfire comes one of those strange concerts half powwow, half prayer meeting, of which Eliza Dodge’s “negro spirituals” & Olmsted’s descriptions give each but a part. These fires are often enclosed in a sort of little booth made neatly of palm leaves covered in at top, a native African hut in short; this at such times [dusk] is crammed with men singing at the top of their voices—often the John Brown song was sung, but oftener these incomprehensible negro methodist, meaningless, monotonous, endless chants, with obscure syllables recurring constantly & slight variations interwoven, all accompanied with a regular drumming of the feet & clapping of the hands, like castanets; then the excitement spreads, outside the enclosure men begin to quiver & dance, others join, a circle forms, winding monotonously round some one in the centre. Some heel & toe tumultuously, others merely tremble & stagger on, others stoop & rise, others whirl, others caper sidewise all keep steadily circling like dervishes, outsiders applaud especial strokes of skill, my approach only enlivens the scene, the circle enlarges, louder grows the singing about Jesus & Heaven, & the ceaseless drumming & clapping go steadily on. At last seems to come a snap and the spell breaks amid general sighs & laughter. And this not rarely & occasionally but night after night.¹⁴³

Though Price’s symphony clearly exhibits traditional Western tendencies, it also displays several instances of characteristic black traits. Unlike Still and Dawson, she avoided providing a descriptive title, which would have suggested a specifically programmatic work. However, when taken as a whole, the symphony displays overwhelming tendencies towards narrative as Price’s work may be signifyin(g) a religious ceremony or a ring shout.

The opening movement begins the ceremony with a solo orator. After a short “chant” other voices begin to be heard. The second movement projects a time of reflection with a hymn-like spiritual that evokes religious services. The third produced the lively rhythm of the juba dance that certainly created an excitement that carried over into the final movement that only stopped when the “spell” was broken with a concluding cymbal crash.

CHAPTER 5
William Levi Dawson’s Negro Folk Symphony

Introduction

The Negro Folk Symphony was composed in 1932. Dawson revised it in 1952 to include more authentic African rhythmic patterns; however this study will examine the original score to preserve the African-American musical tendencies that were in place and to compare it with Still and Price’s symphonies as contextualized by developments of the Harlem Renaissance. Dawson’s own remarks, written for the premiere performance in 1934, make clear the importance of the folk tendencies in this work.

This Symphony is based entirely upon Negro folk-music. The themes are taken from what are popularly known as Negro spirituals, and the practised ear will recognize the recurrence of characteristic themes throughout the composition. This folk-music springs spontaneously from the life of the Negro people as freely today [1934] as at any time in the past, though the modes and forms of the present day are sometimes vastly different from the older creations. In this composition the composer has employed three themes taken from typical melodies over which he has brooded since childhood, having learned them at his mother’s knee.144

The analysis of the 1932 manuscript is made all the more difficult for, as Michael Fleming points out, it is the 1952 version that Leopold Stokowski recorded and it is this form that is most frequently played today.145


145 Fleming, liner notes [CHAN 9226].
The *Negro Folk Symphony* is a programmatic work as is indicated by the titles of each of its three movements: *The Bond of Africa, Hope in the Night*, and *O, le’ me shine, shine like a Morning Star!* Unlike the Still and Price symphonies, the underlying forms of the individual movements adhere to traditional nineteenth-century Romantic styles.

Since Dawson’s symphony was premiered well after Still’s, he was criticized for attempting to imitate Still’s work. In response to these critics, Dawson proclaimed that he was trying “to be just myself, a Negro. To me, the finest compliment that could be paid my symphony when it had its premiere is that it unmistakably is not the work of a white man. I want audiences to say only a Negro could have written that!” Indeed Dawson’s work is quite different from Still’s. Where Still chose to create all original themes based in the blues idiom, Dawson chose to combine original themes with known black spiritual themes within his symphony. In fact, while commenting on his symphony in an interview with Nathaniel Standifer, Dawson states that he would like the public to know and aurally identify these tunes not just the highly recognizable “missing link” motive, Dawson’s primary motive.

I should like them to try to know the two or three Negro folk songs that I use. Not all of the song, bits of it, and then develop it. I wish they could learn that. I have been to one or two sessions while they were studying that and they wanted me there to ask all [sic] questions. All the [sic] knew was the opening theme called the missing link. All of them knew that. But that is just a symbol of something. Something like a light motif [sic].

John Andrew Johnson elaborates further on the spirituals and the original themes that Dawson used:

Several of these ideas are original (“written in the style of spirituals” and thus perceptible as indicative of other genres, black or white), the traditional tunes that are used are not among the better known pieces from the repertory, and the melodies are only briefly excerpted, harmonized anew, fragmented, continually varied, and developed. This combination yields, as Floyd put it, “something more” than simply an attempt to depict

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the “Negro folk” experience in sound. Dawson’s work is thus really a meta-work, showing how such a piece need not to be “blue” in order to be “black.”

First Movement, The Bond of Africa

The first movement of the symphony is in sonata form. As Table 5.1 illustrates, it begins with an extensive introduction before moving into the exposition.

Table 5.1: Formal Outline, Dawson First Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Key(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Link Motive (MLM)</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>C minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential Extension</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Theme</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>C min/maj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>13-14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLM</td>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>F minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>19-20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Theme</td>
<td>21-26</td>
<td>F min/maj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>27-28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>29-38</td>
<td>F min→Eb major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exposition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>39-48</td>
<td>Eb major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking material</td>
<td>48-57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>57-66</td>
<td>Eb major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition (MLM)</td>
<td>67-127</td>
<td>Eb maj→Bb major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>128-137</td>
<td>Bb major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>138-145</td>
<td>Bb major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>146-178</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing MLM and PT</td>
<td>178-207</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied Repetition</td>
<td>208-236</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Transposed up a half-step)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing MLM and ST</td>
<td>237-287</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retransition</td>
<td>289-301</td>
<td></td>
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Table 5.1 continued

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Key(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recapitulation</td>
<td>302-425</td>
<td>Eb major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>426-521</td>
<td>Eb major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The introduction is quite elaborate, presenting two different themes in two different keys before making the transition into the main body of the movement. While such an introductory section may seem extraordinary, Michael Tilmouth and Julian Budden point out that in the “Classical period an introduction (comparatively rare in a minor-key work) might consist of anything from a chord or two functioning primarily as a call to attention, to a lengthy section with a definite thematic content developed and extended within an appreciable form.” They provide several examples of works that incorporated lengthy introductions:

In Haydn’s Quartet op. 71 no.2 the introduction is not a few chords but a complete phrase, and this development is carried much further in many of his London symphonies. The introduction to no. 99 in Eb, for example, embraces clear thematic contrasts and a degree of development in its binary structure. It retains the essential characteristics of an introduction, however, in that its tonal scheme is completed only when the music is precipitated into the ensuing Vivace assai. Introductions on this extended scale are found in many of Mozart’s orchestral divertimentos and serenades and in his Symphonies nos. 36, 38 and 39.149

Dawson’s introduction opens with one of his original themes, which Dawson refers to as the “missing link,” which, as he describes, represents a link that “was taken out of a human chain when the first African was taken from the shores of his native land and sent to slavery.”150 This motive, seen in Figure 5.1, is very important not only to this movement, but also to the symphony as a whole because it is the binding element that links all the movements together.

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150 Southern, Music of Black Americans, 427.
This melody introduces the work’s pentatonicism, linking it with black melodies and the other two symphonies discussed earlier. In addition, it introduces the black musical procedure of call and response. The motive is first performed by a solo French horn, which acts as the leader, presenting an opening call to both the movement and the symphony.

The response comes from a chorus of strings and woodwinds in the form of another introductory melody that shifts back and forth between the major and minor modes. This theme, Figure 5.2, answers the call in a diatonic fashion.

After a short two-measure extension that outlines both C major and C minor arpeggiations, the missing-link motive returns. The extending measures act as a dominant pivot chord changing the tonal center to that of F minor, in which both the call and response are heard in their entirety. Following this second statement, the missing link motive returns in a fragmented fashion at its original pitch level. This creates an illusion of returning to the key of C minor. However, this is the beginning of the transition, which also includes fragments of the introductory theme, and

Figure 5.1: “Missing Link” Motive (call), Dawson First Movement, mm 1-5

Figure 5.2: Introductory Theme (response), Dawson First Movement, mm 7-12
transports the piece toward a Bb dominant chord, preparing the exposition for the key of Eb major.

The intricate introduction to the symphony at first is harmonically confusing leading into the exposition and the key of Eb. However, from a structural standpoint, the harmonic progression provided by the introductory material indeed does prepare for the arrival of the exposition. As the voice-leading graph shows, Figure 5.3, the keys of C minor and F minor function as the submediant and supertonic chords of Eb; therefore, the underlying chord progression of the introduction becomes submediant, supertonic, dominant leading into the tonic Eb when the exposition begins.

Figure 5.3: Voice-leading sketch, Dawson First Movement, mm 1-39
The exposition of this movement changes both time signature and tempo, changing from *Adagio* in four to *Allegro* in cut-time. At its beginning, an original primary theme is heard for the first time. It is shown in Figure 5.4.

![Example 5.4: Primary Theme, Dawson First Movement, mm 39-48](image)

After this initial statement, eight measures of cadential material links to a second statement of the primary theme. This second statement of the theme is recognizable, though it is abruptly cut short by the start of an extended transition, which is based on a portion of the missing link motive.

The transition begins with a diminution of the missing link motive in the key of G major. It then travels through the key of A minor toward the key of D major. At this point in the transition, Dawson uses a unique sequence, the repetition of the material of the entire 16 measure transition. This transitional sequence continues to show the importance of the missing link motive, and begins to illustrate the significance of the black musical technique of repetition in this movement, which will also become a major issue in the symphony as a whole. As the sequence continues, the tonal center changes from D major to E minor finally arriving on Eb minor, a half-step away. The missing link motive begins making appearances in a stretto fashion and in differing rhythmic values emerging both in diminution and augmentation. Before the end of the transition, the primary thematic material is briefly heard, which helps conclude the transition and set up the first statement of the secondary theme.
The secondary theme is loosely based on the chorus of the black folk song *Oh my Lit’l Soul Gwine-a Shine*, a version of which is given in Figure 5.5. It is first heard played by the solo oboe.

**Figure 5.5**: *Oh my Lit’l Soul Gwine-a Shine*<sup>151</sup>

Figure 5.6 provides Dawson’s theme, which is based on the basic idea of the chorus and develops and expands upon it.

**Figure 5.6**: Secondary Theme, Dawson First Movement, mm 128-137

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This theme is composed of asymmetrical phrases; the antecedent phrase, or call, is four measures long while the consequent phrase (response) is six measures. The harmony that accompanies this melody is quite simple, primarily the dominant and tonic chords, perhaps signifying the simpler times of African life before being placed in bondage. The secondary theme is restated in the upper strings and woodwinds, projecting a call and response setting from the first solo statement through orchestration. At the conclusion of this second statement, Dawson begins the transition to the development. Before arriving at the development, a contrasting section that “clearly captures the rhythmic spirit of the juba in an orchestral countermelody that mimics the effect of hand-clapping and, by its lively character, concludes the exposition…” is heard (Figure 5.7).

\[\text{Figure 5.7: Juba Rhythm, Dawson First Movement, mm 164-175}\]

\[\text{152 Johnson, “Dawson, ‘The New Negro’ and His Folk Idiom,” 50.}\]
The development begins in sharp contrast to the exposition by recalling the opening missing-link motive through a sudden shift back to an Adagio that is reminiscent of the introduction, this time played in the key of Ab minor. It quickly returns to the faster tempo after three measures that continue to develop the missing-link motive. As this section progresses, the primary theme as well as the missing link motive may be heard entering in a stretto fashion. Interest is added to the missing link theme as it is sometimes heard in inversion and in diminution. This layering of melodies enhances harmonic tension as they create a polytonal section. Dawson is using the black musical technique of stratification, which may be signifying the two different themes. Figure 5.8 illustrates a portion of this section.

**Example 5.8:** Development, Dawson First Movement, mm 190-201
As the development continues, however, another technique continues to be heard, repetition. After 30 measures, Dawson interrupts the flow of the development by once again invoking the introduction’s missing link motive in the slower tempo. On further inspection, this is the beginning of a repetition of the previous developmental material transposed up a half-step. This may also be signifyin(g) the transition, which had a similar repeated area.

Following the repeated section, Dawson continues to develop the missing-link motive before moving into a fragment of the secondary theme, which is performed both in its traditional form and in inversion. Once again, this thematic material enters in stretto fashion recalling the earlier stratification of the development. As the development comes to a close, the “juba” rhythm returns before the beginning of the retransition.

The retransition begins with another sudden tempo change while the missing link motive is performed by full orchestra. It progresses to the recapitulation by gradually reducing the instrumentation, until the primary theme is heard in a single cello voice with minimal harmonic backing.

The recapitulation continues the practice of thematic repetition that was established earlier in the transition and development. Following Classical/Romantic tradition, Dawson literally repeats the exposition with the secondary thematic material transposed up a perfect fourth to allow the movement to remain in the tonic key. The movement closes with an extended coda that continues to develop all the main themes.

**Second Movement**

The second movement of Dawson’s symphony is entitled “Hope in the Night.” It is the only movement in this symphony that is composed entirely with original themes. However, there are similarities between these themes and the first movement.

The form of this movement is a modified ABA’ form, in which the A portion is written in a fugue-like manner. The different sections of the form are clearly delineated by the slow (Andante), fast (Allegretto), and slow (Andante) tempo markings. Table 5.2 provides an outline of the form.
Table 5.2: Formal Outline, Dawson Second Movement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three Gong Strikes</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme (Subject)</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>B minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential Episode</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat of Primary Theme</td>
<td>13-16</td>
<td>B minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode</td>
<td>17-37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>38-41</td>
<td>B minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential Episode</td>
<td>42-46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>48-58</td>
<td>D major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential Extension</td>
<td>59-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>62-72</td>
<td>D major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental</td>
<td>73-126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>127-130</td>
<td>D maj/B minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential Episode</td>
<td>131-133</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retransition</td>
<td>134-161</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Episode</td>
<td>162-176</td>
<td>B minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>177-180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential Episode</td>
<td>181-187</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>188-191</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadential Episode</td>
<td>192-197</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>198-211</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The movement begins with a solo gong that is struck three times which represents a “symbol of the Trinity that guides the destiny of man.”\(^\text{153}\) This leads into a plodding string line on a pedal G major seventh chord—which Dawson described as “suggesting the monotonous life

of the people who were held in bondage for 250 years—\(^{154}\)—and becomes the accompaniment to the primary theme which is heard in the solo English horn. The primary theme or “subject,” seen in Figure 5.9, is a variation of the “missing link” motive that was heard in the opening movement. This theme exhibits all the characteristics of a fugal subject: a short duration, propelling motion and a weak ending. Therefore, this melody could be considered a subject, helping further the idea of a fugal section.

![Musical notation](image)

**Figure 5.9:** Primary Theme, Dawson Second Movement, mm 5-8

The suggested harmony of the melody in the example clearly supports B minor which creates a moment of uncertainty when placed above the G major harmony created by the strings. Dawson may be signifyin(g) the insecurity the slaves felt by creating an ambiguous opening key center. He is also emphasizing the plagal relationship, which is a common black musical trait. After this initial statement of the motive, a four measure cadential episode, which provides the first change in harmony, leads into a restatement of the primary theme with an elision, Figure 5.10. Figure 5.11 provides a voice-leading graph of these same measures.

\(^{154}\) Ibid.
Figure 5.10: Primary theme with pedal bass line, Dawson Second Movement, mm 5-16
After the second statement of the motive, Dawson begins a long episodic passage. An episode, according to Wallace Berry, is “an area of tonal movement, of often substantial explorative manipulation of subject or countersubject motives.” He goes on to say that episodes may sometimes use “material not explicitly related to that of the exposition” and that fragmentation and sequence are the “most fundamental traditional techniques of episodic development.”

This passage functions as a transitional segment using a fragment of the cadential episode in a sequential fashion. While the music travels through several tonal centers, the episode ultimately leads to the original key and theme. This is significant because, as was discussed in Chapter 2, the lack of modulation, as well as repetition, is a common trait in black music. After the repeated primary theme a short cadential episode closes the A section both tonally and thematically, as indicated in Figure 5.12.

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**Figure 5.11:** Voice-leading sketch, Dawson Second Movement, mm 5-16

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155 Berry, *Form in Music*, 361-362.
Example 5.12: Voice-leading sketch, Dawson Second Movement, mm 38-46

The example shows an internal fifth descent locally replicating the *Uirlnie* completing its descent at the end of the A section. The line is supported by chord progression of tonic, dominant of dominant, dominant seventh, and finally concludes on tonic.

The B portion of this movement begins with a melody over a pedal bass chord, just as in the previous section. It is in the key of D major, the relative major of B minor, and provides much needed contrast to the continuously brooding primary theme.

The secondary theme, Figure 5.13, is lively symbolizing the “merry play of children yet unaware of the hopelessness beclouding their future.”\(^\text{156}\) It consists of an antecedent and consequent phrase, which may also be recognized as call and response form. After its initial statement, a short cadential extension precedes a repetition of the secondary theme with an altered consequent phrase.

This playful melody is reminiscent of the juba dance rhythms in the first movement as well as the Price third movement. Therefore Dawson could be signifyin(g) the first movement of this symphony as well as the dance rhythms. However, this joyful dance is periodically interrupted by not only the primary theme but also the missing link motive, perhaps reminding the dancing children of their impending plight as evidenced in the upcoming developmental area.

The developmental portion of this section begins perhaps signifyin(g) the first movement with a restatement of its primary theme as well as the missing link motive. These melodies, though recognizable, are altered through augmentation and diminution. These themes along with the original are given in Figure 5.14.
The tonal center moves around quite freely as well—from D to A to B minor to Db and back to D—at which point the antecedent phrase of the secondary theme and the hopefulness returns. The tonal area continues fluctuating moving from Eb to C minor back to B minor as the thematic material continues to develop through fragmentation and transposition.

The return of the primary theme is very similar to the opening statement, in that it is heard in the English horn played over a G major seventh chord in the strings just as in the beginning. However, this is a false entrance of the primary theme because the development of the dance melody has not finished. This statement, therefore, may be signifying the return by anticipation. The continued fragmentation of the dance melody is also a significant event, it could be signifying that the “dancing children” are still not ready to give in and lose sight of their hope. This hope, though, is fleeting because the music makes a short retransition, passing through several key centers, before the A section returns in mirror fashion, with themes reversed.157

The return begins with an episodic passage that could function as the resolution of the false or anticipated entrance of the primary theme heard before the retransition. It is also very similar to the earlier statement, producing the same harmonic progression that leads into a new statement of the primary theme.

Though the melodies are heard in reverse order, Dawson once again conforms to the traditional Romantic standards by literally repeating them, with the exception of one interpolated measure in the middle and a few extra cadential measures. The piece comes to a close with a short coda that not only rhythmically imitates the episode, but also includes the missing link motive before ending with three strikes of the gong over open fifths.

**Third Movement**

The final movement is entitled *O, le’ me shine, shine like a Morning Star!* Like the first movement, it is in a sonata form; however, this movement does not begin with an introduction. Table 5.3 provides the formal outline of the finale.

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157 This musical style has been discussed previously in relation to Still’s first movement in Chapter 3. For any further explanation of this concept, please see pages 41 and 42.
### Table 5.3: Formal Outline, Dawson Third Movement

**Sonata**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Key(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exposition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tremolo</em> Strings</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Theme</td>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation Primary Theme</td>
<td>13-22</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(consequent)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>23-91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>92-95</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode</td>
<td>96-99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>100-103</td>
<td>(C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode</td>
<td>104-107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>108-111</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>112-121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hallelujah</em> verse melody</td>
<td>122-125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(developing melody)</td>
<td>126-149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stratification of PT</td>
<td>150-197</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Movement ST</td>
<td>198-205</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Theme</td>
<td>206-221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST in inversion</td>
<td>222-227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inversion of PT and ST</td>
<td>228-240</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Juba-like” syncopation</td>
<td>241-265</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT (augmentation)</td>
<td>266-291</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>292-300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Juba”</td>
<td>301-315</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False Recapitulation</td>
<td>316-325</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recapitulation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary theme area</td>
<td>326-381</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary theme area</td>
<td>382-409</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental area</td>
<td>410-439</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coda</strong></td>
<td>440-555</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The movement begins with *Tremolo* strings that lead into the first statement of the primary theme, which is based on the traditional spiritual *O, Le’ Me Shine, Shine Like a Morning Star*. This melody is presented in a call-and-response manner, first stated by the upper woodwinds and answered by the low-woodwinds and brass, revealed in Figure 5.15. The leaders repeat the call before the answer is complete, creating overlapping phrases.

**Figure 5.15:** Primary Theme, call-and-response, Dawson Third Movement, mm 5-13

This melody is similar to Dawson’s missing link motive from movement 1, shown here as Figure 5.16. Therefore, his missing link melody may retroactively be signifyin(g) this spiritual, as well as creating a stronger bond between the different movements of this work, because the missing link motive is interspersed throughout the second and third movements.

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158 I was unable to locate any notated version of this spiritual however, several scholars indicate that the primary theme is based on this folk song including Eileen Southern, John Andrew Johnson, and Mark Hugh Malone.
At the conclusion of the second theme “call,” a new answer leads into a lengthy transition, which includes the motive of the primary theme performed at different pitch levels as well as recalling the missing link motive. The black musical technique of stratification in the accompanying strings creates a chord progression which may also be described as “heterophony.” Chadwick Hansen defines this process as, “a kind of horizontal texture in which each instrument or voice performs a variation on the same melody.” Figure 5.17 provides the string line.

This accompanying line tonicizes the key of G minor until the second half of measure 30, at which point, as was also observed in the first movement, the transitional material repeats in the tonal center of B minor. The transition continues to develop the primary theme, missing link motive, and key. At the conclusion of this repeated material, Dawson includes an interesting twist to this transition by introducing a motive of the secondary theme, which is heard over a series of dominant and diminished seventh chords that lead into the secondary tonal area. By incorporating this theme into the transition, Dawson could be signifyin(g) the secondary melody through anticipation.

Figure 5.16: Missing Link Motive

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Thesecondarytheme,providedinFigure5.18,issetfourmeasureslongandfollowedbyfourmeasuresoflinkingmaterialbeforeitisrepeated.

**Figure 5.17:** Stratification, Dawson Third Movement transition, mm 22-31

The secondary theme, provided in Figure 5.18, is four measures long and followed by four measures of linking material before it is repeated.

**Figure 5.18:** Secondary Theme, Dawson Third Movement, mm 92-95
It is based on the chorus of the traditional spiritual *Hallelujah, Lord I Been Down into the Sea*, a version of which is given in Figure 5.19.

![Chorus and Verse](image)

**Figure 5.19:** *Hallelujah, Lord I Been Down into the Sea*¹⁶⁰

The tonal center of the secondary theme begins in G major but quickly seems to shift to a new tonal center, concluding on E minor harmony by the end of the four measures. The linking material adds to the harmonic confusion, as it seems to transition to C major, concluding on a French augmented sixth chord of C that elides into the repetition of the secondary theme. While the notes of the melody are on the same pitches as heard previously, the harmony continues to center on the tonal area C, eliding into another linking episode with a cadence on a first inversion C chord. The episodic passage quickly makes a retransition closing with an authentic cadence in G major. Dawson instantly complicates the harmonic issue once more as the secondary theme

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returns. This statement of the melody is heard over a chromatically moving bass accompaniment that creates a non-functional chord progression, which continues into a transition and again cadences in G as the development begins. Figure 5.20 provides an illustration of these events.

**Figure 5.20:** Dawson, Secondary Tonal Area, third movement, mm 92-112

The development of this final movement incorporates stratification of both the primary and secondary themes, while developing them through augmentation, diminution, and inversion. He also includes syncopation of the rhythms, perhaps signifyin(g), once again, the hand clapping patterns of the juba.

The development is tonally unstable, though cadences are certainly heard throughout, including ones in G major and minor, Eb major, and Bb minor. The section does not stay in any one tonal center long enough to establish a key, which is very much in keeping within the traditional nineteenth-century idea of developmental sections. Charles Rosen explains that
within the development “modulations must not only be rapid, but must also never give the impression of a second tonality.” He goes on to say that “chromaticism of the development section is almost always more pronounced than in any other for the same reason—to postpone stability.”

Although Dawson featured a portion of the chorus of the *Hallelujah* spiritual as the secondary theme, he slips the verse in as a thematic device for the development. It is clearly heard in the oboes, after which the rhythm is manipulated through augmentation. Dawson could be signifyin(g) this spiritual by delaying the arrival of the verse including it in the developmental section rather than integrating it into the secondary theme. Figure 5.21 provides the original and one variation of the theme.

![Original and Variation of Theme](image)

**Figure 5.21:** *Hallelujah* verse, Dawson Third Movement, mm 122-125

Stratification plays an important role in the development creating an unstable environment for both melody and harmony. Dawson cleverly incorporates diminution, augmentation, and elision into the stratification of the primary theme as Figure 5.22 illustrates.

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Dawson features many other techniques that propel the development forward, including inversions of both the primary and secondary themes (performed separately and together), syncopated rhythms, and perhaps to help unify the symphony, the secondary theme of the second movement (Figure 5.13, pg. 143) is briefly identifiable and explored. He also includes a “false recapitulation” that functions as a retransition into the recapitulation. Figures 5.23 and 5.24 show the development of the second movement theme and the syncopated, “juba” rhythms respectively.

**Figure 5.22:** Stratification of PT in development, Dawson Third Movement, mm 162-171
The recapitulation, as might be expected from the discussion of the previous two movements, repeats the exposition almost verbatim, changing the instrumentation as well as the transition into the secondary theme, which is heard in its entirety in the tonic key a major third lower than the original. This next event in the recapitulation is surprising—the return of a segment of the development—the first time Dawson includes a developmental passage outside of the recapitulation section in this symphony. Although this is rare, Rosen points out that “when
the development contains new material, it, too, may be resolved in the recapitulation.” 162 In the earlier discussion the transition elided into the development, cadencing on G major, before stating a new theme based on the verse of the spiritual Hallelujah; likewise, in the recapitulation the elision is heard with a plagal cadence in Eb, the tonic key, leading into the new theme. This developmental section resolves the issue of the new theme and progresses into the coda as it strays into a new section. However, Johnson points out that the coda’s “exact location is difficult to pinpoint…since it grows directly from the ongoing development or summation.” 163 Before the close of the symphony the primary theme is heard again prior to the secondary theme, which reinforces both the themes and the emotion of the movement, possibly suggesting that there is still hope for a promising future.


CHAPTER 6
Conclusions

William Grant Still, Florence Price, and William Levi Dawson were all composing during the early twentieth century. Their first major symphonies were composed during the Harlem Renaissance (1919-mid-1930s) and were premiered within five years of each other. These symphonies were the first large-scale orchestral works written by black composers to be performed by major orchestras. Encouraged by black leaders and strongly influenced by the writings and music of Dvorák, they incorporated traditionally black musical elements into their music in both obvious ways, by including folk musical instruments, such as the banjo, and African drums and subtle ways, by alluding to various jazz and blues forms.

This dissertation referenced many different techniques that scholars have used to analyze works by black composers. Purely traditional music-theoretical approaches include descriptions of musical forms, Roman numeral analysis, and voice-leading graphs. While these methods worked well in illustrating the traditional properties of the music (as all three composers were classically trained), they do not engage elements of the music that were intended to code it as “African” or “African-American” and therefore did not account for the bifurcated roots of black American music. Therefore I adopted a combination of analytical methods based on the work and writings of Eero Taratsi, Kofi Agawu, Teresa Shelton, Samuel Floyd, and Henry Louis Gates to understand the musical intricacies involved in black music. As Floyd states:

When the music successfully communicates essentials of the African-American experience, in spite of its European basis, it becomes something more than either European or Afro-American. It becomes, to some extent, at least, black music.\(^{164}\)

Combined with traditional musical analytical techniques, these methods address all elements of the musical context.

Agawu’s work in *Playing with Signs* (1991) is a fusion of semiotic, voice-leading, and topical analyses of classical music that laid the backdrop for the current study. It led to Tarasti’s groundbreaking work on structural music semiotics in *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (1994), which included formulas of analysis based on Nattiez’s semiotic square. Shelton modified Tarasti’s theory to include Isolemic Cumulative Graphs, which she applied to a piano piece by Price. Although these methods accounted for part of my analysis, it was not until reading the works of Floyd who suggested a model for analysis, signifyin(g), based on the black literary theory of Gates’ *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (1988) that my approach became clear. To this extent my work relies heavily on black musical characteristics that include call-and-response, repetition, gapped scales, blue notes, as well as others.

Although it is clear that all three symphonies exhibit black musical characteristics and tendencies, the composers achieved their distinctive sounds in different fashions. While Still and Price both included non-traditional orchestral instruments, such as the banjo and African drums, and manipulated the traditional formal structure of their movements, Still created a jazz and blues inspired symphony by including pieces that followed both the 12-bar and 32-bar blues progression. Price, on the other hand, chose a more traditional folk sound, incorporating a hymn-like spiritual and an African dance, the Juba, perhaps signifyin(g), as I suggested, a plantation ring shout. Finally, Dawson combines recognizable traditional folk spirituals into standard Romantic-style forms.

While the differences in formal approach and instrumentation make each work unique, I discovered several similarities that may help define the black musical sound of the symphonies. The most notable commonalities among these three works include the frequent use of call-and-response, repetition, and unconventional key relationships.

The blues properties of Still’s symphony are a good starting point. The 12-bar blues harmonic progression, by its very nature, is performed with as many repetitions as deemed necessary with a variation on each new statement. Therefore, the original statement may easily be identified as a call and each subsequent variant a response. Likewise the formal structure of Price’s second movement produces a similar finding. Within the ternary form of this movement I identified a replication of a spiritual form. Traditionally these songs were performed in a verse-refrain format (i.e., call-and-response). I also noted that the ABA structure of this movement
produced a large scale reproduction of call-and-response. Dawson’s symphony follows this
large scale formal design call-and-response as well. It is evident in his first movement in which
the extended introduction that contains thematic material heard in two different keys is the call to
the exposition’s response when the primary theme is heard. While these movements exhibit
large scale examples of the call-and-response technique, each symphony has local level instances
as well.

Still’s work is a blues-inspired symphony that incorporates several common techniques
used by jazz and blues musicians. One of these methods is the practice of alternating four
measure phrases using contrasting instrumentation known as fours; this jazz device is heard in
his first movement and allows the initial four measure phrase to represent a call and the
subsequent phrase a response. In my analysis of Price’s symphony I have identified several
instances of antecedent and consequent phrases, which, given the context, could represent call-
and-response phrasing. As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, in the first movement the introductory
and primary themes act both as caller and respondent. Likewise, phrasing in Dawson is heard
with the missing-link motive acting as a call to the primary theme in his first movement. A
better example of lower-level call-and-response is the stratification of the missing-link theme
where the initial statement is the call and the overlapping statement acts as a respondent.

Another interesting correlation among the symphonies is unorthodox key relationships.
While Romantic era works took more liberties with tonal centers, motion by thirds is a common
musical tendency of black music. Marsha Jean Reisser points out that there is a preponderance
of cadential thirds as well as motion by thirds throughout entire melodies.\(^{165}\) I suggested in
Chapter 4 that key motion by third may likewise be a common element in black music. This is
well established by Price’s symphony which almost exclusively modulates to keys a third apart.
Still, alternatively, modulated to keys a third apart only in his finale, perhaps conforming to the
premise that black music seldom modulates; uses modal mixture instead of modulation within
two of his movements; and modulates by half-step in the first. Dawson, on the other hand, was
more conservative, conforming to the traditional expectations of the Romantic symphony.
However, in his final movement, he too modulated using third relationships.

\(^{165}\) Marsha Jean Reisser, “Compositional Techniques and Afro-American Musical Traits in
Selected Published Works by Howard Swanson” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison,
1982), 124.
Perhaps the greatest similarity among the three composers is in their education and cultural background. All were college educated and faced several levels and forms of discrimination. Dawson was excluded from performances of works and ridiculed openly by orchestral performers. Price was forced to deny her black heritage when she enrolled in the New England Conservatory as a Mexican student rather than face the rampant racism against blacks at that time in the Boston community. Still, as the only black composer in various modernist music organizations including the International Composers Guild, the League of Composers, and the Pan American Association, was under constant pressure by other white musicians to compose music primarily based on his racial heritage. In fact, he was listed as a “negro from Mississippi” in a performance review.166 Most certainly none of these young, black composers received the same opportunities as their white contemporaries. These three composers transcended racial boundaries imposed on them because of their skin color and were able to have their works performed by major orchestras in the United States, ironically, to a mainly white audience. These performances were, perhaps, signifying(g) their ultimate desire: a hope of gaining respect in their field and acceptance as Americans free from segregation, racism, and discrimination.

In this study of three major symphonies by three black composers, I identify both Western and black musical tendencies through a fusion of analytical techniques. It is the union of the composers’ classical training and the inclusion of black musical tendencies that make each work distinctive and important. Most certainly, it is the inclusion of black techniques that contributed to the development of a uniquely American sound.

I hope that this dissertation provides a new perspective on the dual nature that is present in compositions by these black composers, as well as a starting point for a new mode of analysis that will account for the bifurcated roots of this music. Further inspection, using the approaches demonstrated here, may lead to a broader understanding of black musical narrative in not only the works of Dawson, Price, and Still, but other black composers as well.

166 Carol J. Oja, “‘New Music’ and the ‘New Negro’: The Background of William Grant Still’s Afro-American Symphony,” Black Music Research Journal 12, no.2 (Fall 1992), 148-49, 152.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Scott David Farrah received his Bachelors of Arts degree with an emphasis in instrumental music (trombone) from Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi in 1995. He began his graduate studies at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, earning the Master of Music degree in Music Theory in 1998. He then accepted a visiting instructor position at the University of Arkansas in the fall of 1998 prior to entering the Ph.D. program at Florida State University in 2000. While in attendance at Florida State University, Scott was awarded both research and teaching fellowships. At Florida State University he taught courses that are a part of the core undergraduate music theory curriculum. He also served as President of the Florida State University Music Theory Society and acted as Program Chair of the Florida State University Music Theory Society Forum. Scott has recently presented research at The Florida State University Music Theory Society Forum, the GAMMA-UT Conference at the University of Texas at Austin, and at the annual meeting of the South Central Society for Music Theory. He currently resides in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he is actively involved in performance in several musical ensembles.