

CENTER FOR BLACK MUSIC RESEARCH

International Dictionary of
Black Composers



Edited by Samuel A. Floyd, Jr.

VOLUME 2

JONES - WALK



CENTER FOR BLACK MUSIC RESEARCH

**International Dictionary of
Black Composers**

Volume 2
Johnson - Work

Editor

SAMUEL A. FLOYD JR.

*CENTER FOR BLACK MUSIC RESEARCH
COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO*



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PERRY, JULIA AMANDA

Born in Lexington, Ky., March 25, 1924; died in Akron, Ohio, April 26, 1979. **Education:** Piano and violin study as a child; early voice study with Mable Todd, Lexington, Ky., and Akron, Ohio, attended public schools University of Akron, 1942-43; Westminster Choir College, Princeton, N.J., studied composition with Henry Switten, voice, piano, violin, and conducting, 1943-48, B.Mus., 1947, M.Mus. in composition, 1948; Berkshire Music Center, Tanglewood, Mass., studied choral singing with Hugh Ross, summer 1949; Juilliard School of Music, New York, N.Y., special course in operatic conducting, 1950-51; Berkshire Music Center, studied composition with Luigi Dallapiccola, summer 1951; Europe, worked and studied with various teachers including Nadia Boulanger and Luigi Dallapiccola for composition, Emanuel Balaban, Alceo Gallera, and perhaps Adone Zecchi for conducting, returning occasionally to the U.S., 1950; Accademia Chigiana, Siena, Italy, studied conducting, summers 1956-58. **Composing and Performing Career:** Master's thesis, *Chicago*, a secular cantata based on poems of Carl Sandburg, 1948; New York, N.Y., Riverside Church, sacred cantata, *Ruth*, performed, 1950; McMillin Theatre, Columbia University, production of one-act opera *The Cask of Amontillado*, 1954; Europe, conducted various orchestras mainly in performances of her own works and toured as a lecturer on American music under United States Information Service sponsorship, 1950s; numerous performances by American orchestras and chamber groups; *Study for Orchestra* (originally titled *A Short Piece for Orchestra*) performed by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, 1965; New York, N.Y., Town Hall, *Sascha Mater* performed by Clarion Concerts, 1958; recordings of *Sascha Mater*, *Short Piece*, and *Homostasidia C. F.* released by Composers Recordings, Inc., 1960, 1962, and 1969, respectively. **Teaching Career:** Hampton Institute, Va., taught composition, orchestration, and voice, 1948-49; New York, N.Y., and Akron, Ohio, private instructor of composition, orchestration, and conducting, until 1962; Akron Conservatory of Music, Ohio, 1963; Florida A&M University, 1967-68; Atlanta College Center, served one week as a visiting music consultant, 1969. **Honors/Awards:** National Association of Negro Musicians, winner of voice and composition competitions, 1948; Boulanger Grand Prix, 1952; Guggenheim fellowship, 1954, 1956; National Institute of Arts and Letters award, 1964; ASCAP Award to Women Composers for Symphonic and Concert Music, Honorable Mention, 1969.

MUSIC LIST

INSTRUMENTAL SOLOS

Oboe

"Composition for Oboe with Optional Piano Accompaniment," 1972. Unpublished manuscript. Also arranged for clarinet as "Serenity."

Viola

Viola Sonata. Unpublished manuscript. Note: this work received the Boulanger Grand Prix in 1952; manuscript lost.

Piano

"Missaum." In *The New Scribner Library* 11, compiled by Howard Hanson (New York: C. Scribner, 1973), 251-253.

Modern Piano Pieces. Unpublished manuscript.

"Poets on Silk," 1947. Unpublished manuscript.

"Prelude," 1946; revised 1962. In *Black Women Composers: A Century of Piano Music, 1893-1990*, edited by Helen Walker-Hill (Bryn Mawr, Pa.: Hildgard, 1992). Note: may be the same as "Lament." Recorded: Leonards CD-LE339.

Suite of Songs, 1947. Unpublished manuscript.

Three Piano Pieces for Children. Unpublished manuscript.

Ten Easy Piano Pieces, 1972. Unpublished manuscript. Contents: Popping Popcorn; Spreading Peasas Buses.

SMALL INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

Brass

Sensadun (three trumpets, two trombones), 1970-71. Contents: Fanfare, and four additional movements.

Percussion

Ten Throb Series, 1972. Unpublished manuscript. Contents: two movements.

Strings

String Quartet. Unpublished manuscript.

Woodwinds

Quintet for Woodwind Quintette (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, also saxophone), ca. 1963. Unpublished manuscript.

Woodwind Trio (flute, clarinet, bassoon), ca. 1951. Unpublished manuscript.

Combinations

The Bazaar (two English horns, two bassoons, two saxophones, two trumpets), 1963. Unpublished manuscript.

Disentments for Fine Wind Instruments (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn), 1974-76. Unpublished manuscript. Note: may be Symphony no. 13.

Homostasidia C. F. (percussion ensemble, celesta/piano, harp), 1960. New York: Southern, 1966. In *Historical Anthology of Music by Women*, compiled by James R. Briscoe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). Recorded: Composers Recordings, Inc. CRI SD 252.

Pavani (flute, two violins, two violas, two cellos), 1959. New York: Southern, 1962. Note: originally titled *Sepet*.

Suite for Bass and Percussion, 1978. Unpublished manuscript.

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Ballet or Dance for Chamber Orchestra (two flutes, also saxophone, three saxophone, four horns, violin, double basses). Unpublished manuscript.

Simple Symphony or Children's Symphony or Symphony no. 12, 1973. Unpublished manuscript. Note: third movement unfinished.

Solvin (string orchestra), ca. 1976. Unpublished manuscript.



Julia Amanda Perry; courtesy of Alycia Berry and Helen Walker-Hill

- Symphony in One Movement or Symphony no. 1* (violas, double bass). 1961. Unpublished manuscript.
- Symphony no. 5* (Jungtunes). 1966-67. Unpublished manuscript.

FULL ORCHESTRA

- Concertos*. 1963. Unpublished manuscript.
- Episode*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Four Spirituals*. Unpublished manuscript. Contents: I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray; Who Dat A Comin' 'Ovah Yondas; De Bin' Man Strud and Crind; Unidentified.
- Hommage to Visaldi*. 1959; revised 1964. New York: Post-Southern, 1964. Note: may be same as *Visaldiana or Requiem for Orchestra*.
- Module for Orchestra*. 1969 or 1975. Unpublished manuscript. Also arranged for piano.
- A Short Piece for Orchestra*. 1952; reorchestrated 1955 and 1965. New York: Post-Southern, 1962. Note: first revision published as *A Short Piece for Large Orchestra*; second revision titled *Study for Orchestra*; later renamed. Recorded: Composers Recordings, Inc. CRI 145.
- A Suite Symphony*. 1976. Unpublished manuscript. Contents: Bass-Amplification in "Rock and Roll" Style; Wagon-Train and Indians after Sundown; Global Warfare; Sonic "E" in Space; Shamu; Rhythm and Blues; Coal Miners Striked in a Condemned Coal-Mine.
- Symphony no. 3*. 1962; revised 1970. Unpublished manuscript.
- Symphony no. 4*. 1964. Unpublished manuscript.
- Symphony no. 8*. 1968-69. Unpublished manuscript.
- Symphony no. 9*. 1970. Unpublished manuscript.
- Symphony no. 10* (*Sea Symphony*). 1972. Unpublished manuscript.

ORCHESTRA (CHAMBER OR FULL) WITH SOLOISTS

- Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in Two Uninterrupted Speeds*. 1969. New York: Post-Southern, n.d.
- Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*. 1963-68. New York: Carl Fischer, 1978.
- Seven Concertos* (baritone voice, chamber ensemble). Unpublished manuscript. Note: may also be arranged as *Seven Songs for baritone voice and seven instruments*.
- Soloist Mass* (alto or mezzo-soprano, string quartet or string orchestra). 1951. New York: Southern Music, 1952. Also arranged for low voice and piano. Recorded: Composers Recordings, Inc. CRI SD 135.
- Three Negro Spirituals* (soprano or alto, orchestra). 1956. Unpublished manuscript. Contents: Roll Jordan Roll; [Unidentified]; Dere's No Hidin' Place Down Dere. Recorded: Decca Italiana.

ORCHESTRA (CHAMBER OR FULL) WITH CHORUS

- Fragments delle lettere di Seneca Carrara* (SATB, soprano solo, small orchestra). 1950s; revised 1957. New York: Post-Southern (rental).
- Symphony no. 7* (U.S.A.) (SATB, small orchestra). 1967 or 1969. Unpublished manuscript. Contents: five short movements.

BAND

- Fineworks in March* (marching band). By 1972. Unpublished manuscript.
- Football Game Salute* (marching band). 1972. Unpublished manuscript.
- "Gimme That Ol' Time Religion"* (theme song for mini marching band). 1973. Unpublished manuscript.
- Marching Band Salute*. By 1972. Unpublished manuscript.
- Reverence* (concert band). By 1972. Unpublished manuscript.

- Space Adventure Symphony or Space Adventure* (concert band). By 1975. Contents: four movements.
- Symphonic Band Symphony or Symphony no. 6*. 1966. New York: Carl Fischer, 1978.
- Wear Mass* (marching band). 1971 or 1972. Unpublished manuscript.

SOLO VOICE

- "*Allodia*" (medium voice, organ). 1954. Unpublished manuscript.
- "*By the Sea*" (high voice, piano). New York: Galaxy, 1950.
- "*Deep Sworn Vow*" (voice, piano). ca. 1947. Unpublished manuscript.
- "*Free at Last*" (high voice, piano). New York: Galaxy, 1951. Recorded: Koch International Classics 3-7247-2H1.
- "*How Beautiful Are the Feet*" (medium voice, piano or organ). New York: Galaxy, 1954.
- "*I'm a Poor L/I Orphan in This World*" (medium voice, piano). New York: Galaxy, 1952. Recorded: Koch International Classics 3-7247-2H1.
- "*King Jesus Lives*." 1947. Unpublished manuscript.
- "*Lord! What Shall I Do?*" Boston: McLaughlin and Reilly, 1949.
- "*Parody*" (baritone). 1954. Unpublished manuscript.
- "*To Electra*" or "*To Elektra*" (voice, piano). 1947. Unpublished manuscript.

VOICE WITH INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLE

- Bicentennial Reflections* (tenor voice, two clarinets, three percussion, electric bass). 1977. Unpublished manuscript.
- Five Songs* (mezzo-soprano, string quartet). By 1977. Unpublished manuscript.
- Quintary Quintic Song or Trepach* (bass-baritone, two clarinets, viola, baritone horn, piano). 1976. Unpublished manuscript.
- A Short Service* (tenor/soprano, trumpet). 1954. Unpublished manuscript. Contents: Prelude; Racemas Scherzo; Postlude.

CHORAL MUSIC

- "*Be Merciful unto Me, O God*" (SATB, soprano and bass solos, organ). New York: Galaxy Music, 1953.
- "*Carillon Heigh-ho*" (SATB unaccompanied). New York: Carl Fischer, 1947. Recorded, 1977: Silver Crest MOR-111977.
- "*Hymn to Pan*" (SATB, organ or piano). 1963. Unpublished manuscript.
- "*Is There Anybody Here?*" (women's voices). 1947. Unpublished manuscript.
- "*The Lord Is Bines*" (men's voices). 1947. Unpublished manuscript.
- Missa Brevis* (SATB, organ). Unpublished manuscript.
- "*Our Thanks to Thee*" (SATB, contralto solo, organ). New York: Galaxy Music, 1951.
- "*Song of Our Saviors*" (SATB unaccompanied). New York: Galaxy Music, 1953.
- "*Ye Who Seek the Truth*" (SATB, tenor solo, organ). New York: Galaxy Music, 1952.

DRAMATIC MUSIC

- The Case of Amantillado* (one-act opera). 1953. New York: Post-Southern. Premiere, 1954. Note: originally titled *The Bank*.
- Chicago (secular cantata for female narrator, male chorus, orchestra). 1948. Unpublished manuscript. Note: written for master's thesis.
- Rach* (cantata for SATB, organ). 1950. Unpublished manuscript.
- The Sejch Giese* (opera-ballet). 1964. Unpublished manuscript.

- The Symphogales* (opera). 1964–74. Unpublished manuscript. Note: incomplete.
- Three Warnings* (opera or dramatic cantata). Unpublished manuscript.

NOT VERIFIED

Symphony no. 11 (concert band).

PUBLICATIONS

ABOUT PERRY

Dissertation

Green, Mildred Denby. "A Study of the Lives and Works of Five Black Women Composers in America." Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1975.

Articles

- Green, Mildred Denby. "Julia Perry." In *Black Women Composers: A Genesis*, 71–98. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983.
- Obituary. *Black Perspective in Music* 7, no. 2 (1979): 282; 8, no. 2 (1980): 264.

BY PERRY

- "Compendium in Musical Perspective." Unpublished manuscript, 1969.
- "Forty Studies for Classroom Musical Composition." Unpublished manuscript, 1969–70.
- "Generation Gap in Popular Music." Unpublished manuscript, 1969.
- "Performance; Compositions; (Auto)Biography." Unpublished manuscript, ca. 1962–63. (Composers Recording, Inc.).

PRINCIPAL ARCHIVES

- American Music Center, New York, New York.
- Helen Walker-Hill Collection, American Music Research Center, University of Colorado at Boulder, Boulder, Colorado.
- Raymond L. Johnson Collection, Department of Music, Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi.
- Special Collections, The Fisk University Library, Nashville, Tennessee.

* * * * *

In the group of black composers who developed careers in the mid-20th century, Julia Perry stands out as one of the most significant. Given the reality that black composers of modern concert music had even more limited performance opportunities than other American composers, Eileen Southern's claim, in *The Music of Black Americans*, that only two or three African Americans in each generation "achieved national distinction" comes as little surprise. In this regard, Perry can be grouped with contemporaries Hale Smith and T. J. Anderson. Hailed as an individual of great promise, she was favorably recognized during her twenties with major awards, international study opportunities, publications, and favorable notices. The 1960s, perhaps her most productive decade in terms of the quantity of her large-scale compositions, brought Perry distribution by established publishers and the release of three works on separate recordings by Composers Recordings, Inc. Although in that decade she had some major performances, including one by the New York Philharmonic, her public visibility and press coverage seem to have

diminished. Sometime during the 1960s, Perry developed serious physical health problems including acromegaly, and later, probably in 1971, was struck by another grave tragedy: a paralytic stroke affecting her right side. A series of Perry's letters—written largely to Ronald Fried, International Director of the Division of Serious Music for Peer-Southern, between 1971 and 1978 and to Dominique-René de Léma between 1974 and 1978—indicate much about her efforts to regain recognition as well as her struggle to walk, talk, and conduct again. Although she learned to write with her left hand and resumed composing, the last decade of her curtailed life may not reflect her best work. Certainly, poor health inhibited her public life as a musician, and her triply marginalized position as an African American, a woman, and a person with disabilities cannot be overlooked as a factor contributing to the assessment of her work by the musical establishment.

With the growing interest in women musicians generally during the past 15 years, recognition of Perry as a significant figure, despite incomplete knowledge of her compositional output, is demonstrated by her mention in many books and repertoire listings. Perry is among the most frequently mentioned black women composers, along with Florence Price, Undine Smith Moore, Margaret Bonds, and younger women such as Tania León and Dorothy Rudd Moore. Even in short lists of noteworthy black or women composers, Perry's name is almost always present. However, many inconsistencies and errors occur in these dictionary and encyclopedia entries and even in longer treatments of her music. Several factors have contributed to this problem, including poor health, premature death, and a very private family. During the 1990s, two commercial recordings have included her music, and recent performances by organizations such as the Atlanta Symphony and the Bay Area Women's Philharmonic (now the Women's Philharmonic) have occurred. Performance of many works is hampered by either apparently lost manuscripts or the lack of clean, intelligible, published materials. With much of Perry's music still unavailable and few recordings released, firm conclusions about her musical style and its evolutionary path seem premature, but her importance is not disputed.

Perry grew up in a musical household. Her father, a physician, was an amateur pianist who had once accompanied Roland Hayes. Although her mother, America Lois, was not a musician, she took an interest in this aspect of her children's lives. Perry had three older sisters, Lucie, Clara, and America, and a younger sister, Alycia; another sibling had already died. America was an accomplished pianist who died at age 20, when Julia was 16; she is mentioned in Perry's memorabilia, but otherwise unacknowledged by the family or other sources. Two of her four sisters played violin, and one of them, Lucie, was also a pianist. These two older sisters influenced her as a musician. Perry, who studied violin, voice, and piano, began lessons at age six and became serious about music in high school in Akron, Ohio, winning superior ratings in both violin and voice in a regional contest. During her senior year of high school, Perry successfully competed for a scholarship to study at the Cleveland Institute of Music; however, her family decided this was too far from home, so she attended the University of Akron for one year. Then she won a Knight Memorial Education Fund scholarship, established by the Akron *Beacon Journal* president and editor in memory of his father, which supported her undergraduate study

at Westminster Choir College (1943–47) in Princeton, New Jersey. There she was the "pitch giver" in the Westminster Choir and concertmaster of the college orchestra. Tours with the choir often included Carnegie Hall, giving her a sense of a professional venue.

During the summer after receiving a master's degree in composition from Westminster (1948), she participated in a competition at the National Association of Negro Musicians meeting in Columbus, Ohio, where she placed first in voice and tied for first place in composition. Although she taught composition, orchestration, and voice at Hampton Institute in Virginia for only one year (1948–49), Perry made a positive impression, according to fond remembrances by Catherine Duckett, one of her voice students. During her first summer at the Berkshire Music Center in Tanglewood, Massachusetts, in 1949, when she studied choral singing with Hugh Ross, Perry received encouragement and support. Her first published song, "Lord! What Shall I Do?" was on sale at the Tanglewood music store, and several projected performances were announced. Perry's educational experiences—such as a special course in operatic conducting at Juillard (1950–51) and composition study with Luigi Dallapiccola—continued to take her farther from home and brought her into increasing contact with national and international musicians. Perry took Dallapiccola's composition class at the Berkshire Music Center in the summer of 1951—a point at which he was becoming an internationally recognized musician—and the following year, she studied privately with him in Florence.

A focus on smaller forms was common among many women composers—both African-American and European-American—during the earlier part of the 20th century, with black women drawing particular inspiration from oral traditions. Yet Perry's early concentration on solo songs and choral music may also have had its roots in her experience as a singer. The effectiveness and sensitivity of her vocal writing, especially in *Sabat Mater*, were often noted in reviews and sometimes attributed to her vocal expertise. Perhaps Perry conceived *Sabat Mater* for her own voice, as she received praise from Italian music critics for her vocal performances of it in the early 1950s. During her years in Europe, primarily in Florence and Siena, she became fluent in Italian, which allowed her to prepare an Italian libretto for her one-act opera, *The Cask of Amantillado* (*La Botte d'Amantillado*), based on the Edgar Allan Poe story of the same name. Throughout her life, she also wrote English texts for a number of vocal works. In an autobiographical sketch received by Composers Recordings, Inc., in 1969, Perry listed among her creative accomplishments several prose writings: a translation of 78 African fables from Italian to English, a contemporary American play, a three-act dramatic ritual, and an unpublished music dictionary. These activities support journalist Patricia Sides' description of Perry as "well-read and intellectual."

Even though she spent much of the 1950s in Europe, Perry continued to draw explicitly on distinctive features of black musical culture. Like many of her black contemporaries and younger composers, Perry moved fluently between compositions with overt links to African-American musics and compositions lacking external references to black culture. Although final conclusions about her evolving style preferences must await further study, current analysis tentatively suggests that her early works show the strongest attachment to spirituals (e.g., "I'm a Poor L'il Orphan in This

World" and "Free at Last" for solo voice), with works in the mid-1950s and early 1960s employing more exclusively European models (e.g., *Pastoral* [1959] for flute and six strings, *Homage to Vivaldi* [1959, revised 1964], and several symphonies). With growing racial awareness emerging from the Civil Rights struggles of the sixties, Perry, like many black literary figures of the period (e.g., Alice Walker, Paule Marshall, Gloria Naylor, and Toni Morrison), returned to conspicuous issues of the black experience and African-American identity.

Positive reports of Perry's personality during the 1950s and her warm reception by many people in Italy contrast with descriptions of her isolation and poor health during the sixties. Nevertheless, the 1960s appear to have been her most productive decade as a composer, during which she wrote numerous large-scale works (symphonies and concertos) and developed a more daring compositional style. After a paralytic stroke, which caused her much frustration and suffering, Perry learned to write with her left hand and was somewhat able to return to composition, yet she and her career were not the same. Her illness brought isolation and hampered her recognition. Financial problems compounded the tragedy for Perry, who was apparently cared for by her mother during the last years of life.

Perry clearly drew influences from diverse sources and styles. In addition to several spiritual settings, the *Prelude for Piano* (1946, revised 1962) also points toward links with black heritage through its bluesy harmonic vocabulary and notated rhythmic ambiguities. Even in *Symphony no. 5 (Integration)*, with a quasi-abstract title, Perry claimed a hint of a spiritual in the first movement. She credited her study with Nadia Boulanger at the Conservatory of Music in Fontainebleau during the summer of 1952 with "further sharpening her counterpoint technique," and this is evident in works such as *Primo tempo dalle lettere di Seneca Gaerina* (1950s, revised 1957) for soprano, mixed chorus, and small orchestra. However, Dallapiccola was probably the biggest influence on her style, since she began study with him at a particularly impressionable time in her life and apparently remained in contact with him through her years in Italy, which covered most of the 1950s. Although by this time fully immersed in dodecaphony, Dallapiccola's chief interest in 12-tone technique was to achieve motivic unity, to create melodies, and to transform small melodic cells. These aspects of Dallapiccola's style—excluding the 12-tone systems—are precisely those found in at least some of Perry's compositions from this period, such as *A Short Piece for Orchestra* (1952), *Homage to Vivaldi* for orchestra (1959, revised 1964), *Symphony in One Movement* for viola and double basses (1961, also called *Symphony no. 1*), and "Miniature" (undated) for piano.

After her return to the United States in 1959, Perry's music continued to emphasize European art music genres and neoclassical style. During the sixties, she wrote concertos for piano and violin plus most of her approximately one dozen symphonies. Her works favored expressive restraint and motivic emphasis, and her compositional materials were consistently treated in a unified and concise manner. Rhythmic complexity, which varies among compositions, is sometimes created through shifting subdivisions, syncopations, and the use of ties across pulses. Her melodic-harmonic language draws on chromatic as well as diatonic dissonance and makes frequent use of major sevenths with interior thirds. Pitch centers

emerge through reiteration rather than from functional tonality. Some works, notably *The Beaten for an unusual octet* of winds (1963) and *Symphonic Band Symphony* (1966, also called *Symphony no. 6*), utilize almost no melodic lines, relying instead on short repetitive patterns, alternating textures, and rhythmic drive.

The full extent of Perry's response to the renewed interest in distinctive elements of black culture that emerged during the sixties is difficult to assess because she was then in poor health. However, renewed racial awareness is evident in some works, including a poem without music entitled "Graves of Untold Africans" (1965); *Symphony no. 10 (Soul Symphony)* (1972) for baritone and orchestra, drawing on black idioms and *A Suite Symphony* (1976), which includes seven movements titled "Ban-Amplification in 'Rock and Roll' Style," "Wagon-Train and Indians after Sundown," "Global Warfare," "Sonic 'E' in Space," "Slums," "Rhythm and Blues," and "Coal-Miners Sealed in a Condemned Coal-Mine." Of particular note is *Bucentennial Reflections* (1977) for tenor and six instruments, set to a text by Perry, which offers a cautionary tale about U.S. race relations and their potential for violence. Perry focuses on race by prescribing in the score that the three percussionists—dressed in red, white, and blue—be an "American Negro (date complexion)," a "Chinese American," and an "American-Aryan or Jew."

Throughout a wide range of genres and mediums, the duality of Perry's life as an African-American woman is evident. Despite her significance and the recognition she received, especially during the first 15 years of her career, Perry's music has not yet achieved the attention it deserves. More editions, studies, performances, and recordings are needed so that a fuller and more accurate assessment of her output can be developed.

STABAT MATER (1951)

Completed in 1951, *Stabat Mater* is scored for contralto (or mezzo-soprano) and string quartet or string orchestra and sets the late medieval sequence "Stabat Mater dolorosa," often attributed to the Franciscan Jacopone da Todi (d. 1306). In one-third of the lines, Perry's Latin text deviates from the official liturgical text as it appears in the *Liber usualis*. Perry sometimes chose textual variants identical with or similar to those used by two Italian composers, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710–36) and Gioacchino Rossini (1792–1868); in other instances, the alterations are her own invention. Significant musical similarities between Perry's *Stabat Mater* and those earlier settings are also noted in an analysis by Mikred Deady Green. In *Black Women Composers: A Genesis*, Green suggests an "unconscious recall and transformation" of Pergolesi and Rossini material that might imply Perry's "intuitive, subconscious level of composition." Perry also provided her own English singing translation for the 20 rhymed verses.

Perry acknowledged the historic roots of this chant sequence through her lyrical vocal writing, development of contrapuntal melodic lines in the string parts, and modal pitch centers. She set the text syllabically and grouped each pair of stanzas, as was done in the medieval version. However, she frequently obscured the division into ten sections and countered the regularity of its poetic form in which each pair of stanzas follows a rigid rhyme scheme (aabccb). Phrase lengths vary, and there is no attempt to help the listener hear the original structure or rhymes. *Stabat Mater* is a

rhapsodic outpouring with dramatic, even operatic elements that further link Perry's and Rossini's treatments of this text. Describing her conception of the work in the jacket liner notes, Perry states that it "consists of three characters—Jesus, Mary and the spectator. In the first half of the drama the spectator stands apart regarding the awesome sight. In the second half, the spectator's wish to share the burden is expressed in the words 'Ye ne cruce custodie [of Thy cross, Lord, make me keeper]:' A particularly striking example of text painting brings the first half to its conclusion. Following the text 'Saw her Sweet One dying/Yes, forsaken, crying/Yield His spirit up to God,' high register strings transport the soul upward in a series of intense harmonies. In contrast to this, the phrase 'When did body death has risen' (in section ten) is sung in a low register marked *con morbida e cres.* with soft *trionfo* accompaniment. This quickly rises in pitch and dynamic level to support the soul's victory in 'Paradise.'

In this stylistically eclectic work, no single harmonic or melodic organization occurs, but Perry's writing avoids simple triads and cadences typical of functional tonality (e.g., dominant to tonic harmonic or melodic gestures). *Stabat Mater* blends quartal harmony, whole-tone scales, and modal melodies (especially Dorian mode at various pitch levels) into a texture of chromatic and dissonant dissonance. Perry's vocal writing has frequently been admired. For example, Ross Perlmutter cites her "effective declamation" and also praises her "vividly expressive string coloration." The role of the double bass in the alternate instrumentation is rarely independent. Occasionally, it presents a simplified version of the cello line; otherwise, it intermittently doubles the cello at the unison or octave.

Southern Music published both orchestral and piano-vocal scores in 1954. Robert Sabin noted that with this work, Perry "spreads her wings a bit." He was impressed by the contemporary idiom, the large-scale formal design, and vigorous style but felt "a certain rigidity in the thematic material." Composer Ross Lee Finney was also mixed in his review of the score, finding both "moments of interest" and "stylistic inhumanity."

Frequently listed among Perry's most well-known works, *Stabat Mater* was "the piece that launched her career" on both sides of the Atlantic and "has since been widely performed in both Europe and the United States," writes William Flanagan in the jacket liner notes to the recording. Several performances are claimed as the premiere, and current research has been unable to verify these and their exact chronology. By 1953, *Stabat Mater*, with Perry as vocal soloist, had received praise from Italian music critics; the Mozarteum Symphony Orchestra string section had recorded it for performance on a Salzburg radio station; and Metropolitan Opera mezzo-soprano Herta Glas had performed it at the Aspen Music Festival with the New Music String Quartet. The work may also have been performed at Tanglewood (summer 1951) and in Akron, Ohio (October 1951). Glas at least forecast another performance at Town Hall during spring 1954. On February 20, 1954, mezzo-soprano Virginia Shuey, a friend of Perry, performed the work on a Composers Forum concert at the McMillin Theatre of Columbia University with the Columbia University Orchestra conducted by Howard Shames, whom Perry had met at Tanglewood and who conducted several concerts

including her music. According to Parmenter's review of the 1958 performance of the work as part of the Clarion Concerts series at Town Hall, "the work was brilliantly sung by Miss [Betty] Allen and it had a marked success with the audience." This was the New York concert debut for Allen, one of several very successful black musicians who performed Perry's music. At this same concert, on December 9, Perry first came to the attention of music critic Raoul Abdul, who claimed, "It was immediately clear that here was a composer of great individuality, daring, and technical skill." For the final concert of their 25th season, Clarion Concerts again programmed *Stabat Mater* on March 10, 1982, at Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center. Again, Perry's longtime friend and colleague Newell Jenkins conducted, this time with singer Katherine Ciesinski. On May 15, 1988, Elvira Green and the Tigot String Quartet gave a partial performance (omitting sections three and nine) as part of the Smithsonian Institution's fourth annual Music of the Black American Composer program on a concert titled "In Celebration of Black Women Composers." In the program book, Bernice Johnson Reagon, director of the program in Black American Culture, commented on the need for programs by black women composers because "our historical sense of our music culture is warped" by their exclusion. Reagon's goals for the program included challenging the exclusionary practices of many musical organizations and enriching audiences through more inclusive programming.

A SHORT PIECE FOR ORCHESTRA (1952)

A Short Piece for Orchestra (later also called *Study for Orchestra*) was composed in 1952 while Perry was in Florence, Italy, and was premiered there by the Turin Symphony with conductor Dean Dixon, another prominent African-American musician who cultivated a career in Europe. In the original version, which Perry called the chamber orchestra version, the ensemble is relatively modest and only slightly larger than many classical-period symphonies: strings, pairs of woodwinds, horns, trumpets, and timpani. To this Perry added two trombones, harp, piano/celesta, and two percussionists playing xylophone, snare drum, suspended cymbal, and bass drum (omitted in the score's instrumentation list, the bass drum plays only one note). Perry's first revision, a reorchestration for large orchestra for the 1955 performance by conductor Thomas Schurman and the Little Orchestra Society, added piccolo, English horn, bass clarinet, contrabassoon, two horns, a third trumpet, and tuba. The augmentation of instruments appears to have been made to insure proper balance between winds and strings and to enrich the texture, largely through octave doubling or the reinforcement of the horn parts. The piano part is also eliminated in a few spots in this revision. A third version, again only a reorchestration, was created for a New York Philharmonic concert of May 6, 1965, and was retitled *Study for Orchestra*—the origin of confusion in numerous sources. For this version, the winds were scaled back to the original pairs, except for the four horns. Published scores for both the original composition and the first revision are titled *A Short Piece for Orchestra*, although the publisher has used a slight variant for clarity: *A Short Piece for Large Orchestra*.

Although *A Short Piece for Orchestra* has an overall structure of distinct sections (ABA'CA' Coda), its organizing principle is

organic development. Extremely compact, it is built up from several short, related motives that are spun out in larger gestures through varied rhythms, transposition, and pitch reorderings. A fanfare-like reiterated motto chord (*c-d-sharp-f-sharp-d*) heard in measure three is in many ways the heart of the entire work, generating a variety of melodic motives.

In this work, the composer relies on melodic and rhythmic invention for interest and to generate motion or momentum. Despite the importance of the motto chord, the overall texture is often sparse and chordal movement rare. Harmony is most prominent in the transition to the final coda, during which the energy drains away with expanding and contracting two-note chords over a static *b* pedal point (mm. 153–159). The dominant to tonic harmonic relationship of traditional functional tonality is replaced at several crucial points by a dissonant interval (the tritone *f-sharp-d*), such as the timpani part at the conclusion of the A, A', A'', and coda sections. In the last moments of the piece, the motto chord fanfare returns amid a rising sweep to the final chord.

Apart from her master's thesis—*Chicago* (1948), a cantata for female narrator, male chorus, and orchestra—*A Short Piece for Orchestra* is the earliest known work that Perry composed for full orchestra, and Luigi Dallapiccola's influence is substantially in evidence. Perry's inclusion of harp, piano/celesta, and xylophone for both pedal tones and occasional timbral brilliance is also likely derived from Dallapiccola's orchestration techniques.

For such an early work, *A Short Piece* has received considerable attention. Reviewing the performance at Town Hall on February 21, 1955, Ross Parmenter said, "This is a piece that is gentle and spirited by turns. It has plenty of material and perhaps could have been longer to its own advantage, for Miss Perry is both gifted and individual in her style." *Composer-journalist* Ezra Laderman, who noted Perry's stylistic indebtedness to William Schuman (erroneously identified as Walter Schuman) and Dallapiccola, claimed that "The work is too episodic and as a result, loses its flow, but the material is pleasant and well scored." *New York Times* critic Harold C. Schonberg was less enthusiastic about the 1965 performance by the New York Philharmonic, led by William Steinberg; but this performance was a landmark: the first performance by this prestigious orchestra of a composition by a black woman. In fact, this was only the third work the Philharmonic had programmed by a woman born in the United States. In the spring of 1962, Composers Recordings, Inc., released a performance of the chamber version of *A Short Piece for Orchestra* by the Imperial Philharmonic of Tokyo under the direction of William Strickland with funding from the National Council of Women of the United States and the National Federation of Music Clubs. In his liner notes for this recording, Don Jennings described the composition as "a volatile work with a brassy opening." Composer-conductor Kay Gardner selected this work for performance at the National Adult Conducting Competition, held in Wisconsin during summer 1979, in which she placed sixth.

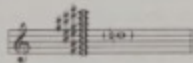
HOMUNCULUS C. F. (1960)

Homunculus C. F., scored for harp, celesta/piano, and an ensemble of eight percussionists, was composed in the summer of 1960 in Akron, Ohio, where Perry occupied an apartment above her father's medical office. According to Perry's record jacket liner

notes, these "clinical surroundings" reminded her of the scene in Goethe's *Faust II* in which Wagner, Faust's apprentice, brings into being Homunculus ("little man" in Latin) in a phial via alchemy. Not only was alchemy's recipe for "dying and becoming" a powerful paradigm for Goethe (*stirb und werde*), but this also proved a rich metaphor for Perry's composition.

Perry described *Homunculus C. F.* in the following figurative terms: "Having selected percussion instruments for my formulae, then maneuvering and distilling them by means of the Chord of the Fifteenth (C. F.), this musical test tube baby was brought to life" (see Ex. 3 for pitches in the chord of the fifteenth, which alternately uses intervals of major and minor thirds). As in the alchemy process, Perry's musical materials unfold gradually. The A section spotlights rhythm through the exclusive use of nonpitched percussion (mm. 1–40) and then the addition of three pitches (d-sharp, g-sharp, f-sharp) by the timpani in a transition section (mm. 41–60). The B section focuses on melody, essentially duets for harp with timpani or celesta (mm. 61–94). At the beginning of this passage, the timpani initiates the fundamental pitch of the basic chord (c), and b is heard for the first time at the entrance of the celesta (m. 81). Harmony is the central parameter in the C section, with increasing density emphasizing the vertical element (mm. 95–105). The focus here is on the first four pitches in the chord only. The concluding segment recapitulates elements from the three earlier sections and gradually introduces the remaining pitches of the chord upon which the work is based (a-sharp, c-sharp, and finally e-sharp) with one variant note (d-sharp is temporarily transposed into a'). The final phrase (mm. 171–180) builds in density to include all ten performers and all eight pitches; Homunculus "becomes" in a sharp flash.

Example 3. *Homunculus C. F.*, the chord of the fifteenth



J. Michele Edwards observes that, in this composition, "Perry creates a precarious balance between pitch (melodic and harmonic) and rhythm. Although percussion is the principal timbre, the macrostructure is based on a single harmonic unit [rather than on rhythm]. . . . And although pitched instruments offer melody and harmony, the instruments chosen (harp, timpani, vibraphone, and even celesta) do not produce sounds with particularly clear pitch focus." As in *A Short Piece for Orchestra*, harmonic gestures are virtually nonexistent despite the generation of pitch material for *Homunculus C. F.* from a chord. The work offers a narrative focused on instability and ambiguous roles, perhaps mirroring the insecurity of the experimental artist in contemporary society—particularly true in the case of an African-American woman during the early years of the Civil Rights movement.

Development of percussion ensemble repertoire within Western classical music emerged during the 1930s, led by several important American experimentalists, including Edgard Varèse

(*Ionization*, 1931), John Becker (*Abogoo*, 1933), Henry Cowell (*Ornstein Pianissimo*, 1934), and John Cage (Quartet, 1935). The establishment of this ensemble was part of a larger exploration of timbre along with the expansion of the orchestral percussion section in terms of size and variety of instruments. Despite the passage of nearly three decades, compositions for percussion ensemble were still somewhat rare and viewed as experimental in 1960. *Homunculus C. F.* is a significant contribution to this repertoire.

The premiere and only verified performance of *Homunculus C. F.* was given at the 19th Manhattan School of Music Workshop Concert by the Manhattan Percussion Ensemble under the direction of Paul Price. Bernard Jacobson's review of the performance claimed that "the work gave evidence of a sensitive ear and of a purposeful rhythmic sense." Using money from her National Institute of Arts and Letters award, Composers Recordings, Inc., released *Homunculus C. F.*, its third Perry work, in September 1969. The reprint of *Homunculus C. F.* in the score compilation *Historical Anthology of Music by Women*, edited by James R. Briscoe, and the reuse of the CRI recording on one of the accompanying cassettes and CDs have helped introduce Perry and her music to a new generation of musicians.

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Samuel A. Floyd Jr., the editor of this dictionary, is Director of the Center for Black Music Research and author of *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (Oxford University Press, 1996), *Black Music Biography: An Annotated Bibliography* (Kraus, 1987), and *Black Music in the United States: An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Reference and Research Materials* (Kraus, 1983). His articles have been published in *American Music*, *Black Music Research Journal*, *Black Perspective in Music*, *Music Educators Journal*, *Music Journal*, and *Nineteenth Century Music*. **Essay:** H. Smith.

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Jeffrey Green, a British businessman and traveler, wrote *Edmund Thornton Jenkins* (Greenwood Press, 1982) after locating the