

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND *INCLUSION*

Charles Lloyd, Jr.

Celebrating 75 Years of A Hidden American Treasure

By João Paulo Casarotti

In this issue, we celebrate the legacy of an incredible educator, Professor Charles Lloyd, Jr., for his impact in classical music and the music teaching community.

—Leah Claiborne

Professor Charles Lloyd, Jr. will celebrate his 75th birthday in 2023. This multifaceted musician has many accomplishments that deserve the spotlight! He is an African American composer, pianist, conductor, accompanist and coach for piano and

voice. The last 32 years he has served as a professor of piano, composition, choir director and mentor to generations of students at Southern University (HBCU), in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Charles, Jr. was born in 1948, in Toledo, Ohio, to a musical family. He studied at Norfolk State University and completed his master of music degree in piano performance at the University of Michigan. While there, he developed a close relationship with Willis Patterson, who “embedded in him mind and heart the special beauty and greatness of the Negro spiritual.” (Lloyd 2023)

Professor Charles Lloyd, Jr. has composed and arranged more than 150 compositions, including instrumental works, hymns, choral pieces, operas, art songs, cantatas, benedictions and approximately 80 spirituals. His dedication to arranging spirituals for both choirs and solo vocalists has contributed substantially to the preservation of this art form. He considers one of the most important accomplishments of his compositional career to be his arrangements for the Deutsche Grammophon recording *Spirituals in Concert* (1990) with Jessye Norman, Kathleen Battle and conductor James Levine. He fondly recalls being at Jessye Norman’s home in the United Kingdom as a 26-year-old composer working on arrangements of “Give Me Jesus” and “I Believe I’ll Go Back Home/Lordy, Won’t You Help Me.” He also arranged many spirituals for the recorded album of soprano Veronica Tyler titled *The Passion of Christ in Spirituals* (1980).



The Spiritual Art Song Collection by Professor Lloyd are organized into two sets. The first was published in 2000 by Warner Bros. and contains 16 spiritual art songs. These songs were recorded by Jacqueline Paige-Green (1951–2020) and Richard Hobson. The collection includes “Ain’t-A Dat Good News!” “Were You There?” and “Hosannah.” The second set consists of 14 selections that have not been published. It features “Amazing Grace,” “Give Me Jesus” and “This Little Light of Mine.”

Collaborative Pianist

As a collaborative pianist, Professor Lloyd was held in high regard for his piano playing and musicianship. He accompanied soprano Jacqueline Paige-Green at the International Voice Competition in Rio de Janeiro, the International Gaudeamus Competition and the Sixth International Tchaikovsky Competition for Voice in Moscow. During the Tchaikovsky Competition, he received the Distinguished Accompanying Award. Furthermore, he has

continued collaborating with other distinguished singers including Oral Moses, Veronica Tyler, Gregory Hopkins, Blanche Foreman and Metropolitan Opera singers George Shirley (tenor) and Richard Hobson (baritone).

Mentor

Professor Lloyd worked as a vocal coach and collaborative pianist at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. He taught at the Peabody Preparatory School, Kentucky State University and public schools in his hometown of Toledo, Ohio. He is well known among the Southern University student body as an influential person on campus who is always concerned with the well-being and success of his students. He said, “When I see a student overcome...lack of early training and transition from gospel artists to concert pianists and opera singers, I feel that they have the victory over self-doubt, insecurity, [and] their parents and peers questioning why they are pursuing degrees in music.... The ultimate reward of teaching is when a student

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overcomes these adversities [and] survives a culture where many of their peers are not striving for excellence [and] reaching their full potential.” (Hudson 2011, 7)

Engagements

Emmett Till, Professor Lloyd’s opera in three acts, was performed at the Manship Theatre in Baton Rouge in May 2023. His *Spirit Song* was performed at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin, in November. This powerful music tells the story of the 1811 New Orleans Slave Revolt. In early 2023, Professor Lloyd suffered a major illness that almost caused his death. In reflecting about this difficult time he says, “I knew that I came back for a reason... I have totally committed my life to music.” (Lloyd 2023)

References

Hudson, Charis Kelly. “The Vocal Works of Charles Lloyd, Jr.: A Performer’s Guide to Selected Dramatic Works, Art Songs, and Spiritual Art Songs.” DMA diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College.

Lloyd Jr., Charles. 2023. Interview by João Paulo Casarotti, September 14, 2023.

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