



Rudi E. Scheidt
School of Music

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

“Her Voice”

OCTOBER 26, 2023 | 7:30 PM

SFPAC

Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music
Kevin Sanders, Director
College of Communication and Fine Arts
Ryan Fisher, Interim Dean

PROGRAM

Overture No. 1 in E minor, Op. 23 (7:00)

Louise Farrenc
(1804-1875)

Symphony No. 1 in E minor (32:00)

Florence Price
(1887-1953)

I. Allegro ma non troppo

II. Largo, maestoso

III. Juba Dance: Allegro

IV. Finale: Presto

(This evening's performance is presented without intermission)

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Harvey Felder, conductor

Fabian Schneider, graduate assistant

VIOLIN I

Sofía Alvarado, concertmaster
Keiber Utrera, associate concertmaster
Lindsay Keck
Dario Santos
Zoe Johnson
Isabella Palmer
Emily Cooley

VIOLIN II

Abby Webber, principal
Gabby Gregory
Sarah Enoch
Catherina Baum
Langston Suggs
Claude Spivey

VIOLA

Noel Medford, principal
Andrew McGuire
Dane Perugini-Cripps

CELLO

Christine Sears, principal
Ella Bondar
Jacob Saunders
Bryan Edward Henderson
Ava Ray
Nazira Wali

DOUBLE BASS

Joshua Shepard
Ebony Grace Gipson
Aniyya Deny

FLUTE

Olivia Remak, principal
Mackenzie Saylor
Samuel Jesuyemi, piccolo

OBOE

Joshua Matthews, principal
Jesus Salazar

CLARINET

Fernando Martinez, principal
Desmon Taylor
Ian Greer

BASSOON

Tina Hazell, principal
Johnathan Gomez

HORN

James Currence, principal
Jimmy Rhine
Steven Groff
Madeline Miller

TRUMPET

Yiming Zhang, principal
Oliver Buckley

TROMBONE

Cassidy Shiflet
Lavonte Smith
Caleb Elrod

TUBA

Bryson Harding

TIMPANI

Marvin Shaw

PERCUSSION

Susannah Clabough
Daniel Padron Hoepf

PROGRAM NOTES

Overture No. 1 in E minor, Op. 23

Louise Farrenc was born in Paris in 1804 into a distinguished artistic family — her father and brother were both Prix de Rome-winning sculptors — and started studying piano and music theory at age six. At 15, she broke a significant gender barrier by being accepted into the previously all-male composition class at the Paris Conservatory. Two years later she married Aristide Farrenc, a flutist, respected teacher, and founder of a music publishing firm.

During the 1830s, Louise Farrenc established an impressive career in Paris as a pianist, composer, and teacher and undertook several concert tours around the country. She began composing seriously during those years — not just small pieces for piano but also large-scale chamber and orchestral works, including two overtures and three symphonies, which received notable performances.

Hardly any other significant French composer was then writing such challenging abstract works. In 1842, Farrenc was appointed piano professor at the Paris Conservatory and distinguished herself in that capacity for the next three decades — the only woman to hold such a prominent permanent position at the school during the entire 19th century. When Louise Farrenc died in Paris on September 15, 1875, she was regarded as one of the foremost female musicians of her time.

The Overture No. 1 opens with powerful unison chords, interjected by gentle woodwind interludes making dazzling and colorful entrances. The trombones add richness to the chords that Farrenc builds from the tonic upwards. The impending opening is then turned into the fast and spirited main melody, led by the violins.

The brass keeps the drama with powerful chords and fanfare-like kernels of music while the strings play fast and exciting passages. Farrenc's woodwind writing is also a highlight, as she uses the flute and clarinet for extended solo lines.

The drive and excitement of the piece are kept alive by the strings constantly chugging away and pushing the melodic material forward. Through the development section, marked by a rather sudden key change, the music takes various twists and turns before fragments of the original melody are pieced back together for the recapitulation.

A triumphant ending combines all the melodic fragments, creating a truly electrifying atmosphere. The chromatic movement towards the end also adds to the build-up and final climax, which sees the cascading strings finally come together with the brass and winds for a final fanfare statement before a rousing finish.

PROGRAM NOTES

Symphony No. 1 in E minor

Florence Smith (Price) was born in Little Rock, AR on April 9, 1887, to James H. Smith and Florence Gulliver Smith. Her father was a dentist in Little Rock, while her mother taught piano and worked as a schoolteacher and a businesswoman. As a child, Price received her early musical instruction from her mother. She attended Capital Hill School in Little Rock, graduating as valedictorian in 1902. Price was accepted and subsequently enrolled at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, MA. In 1906, she received degrees as an organist and as a piano teacher.

After graduation, Price returned to Arkansas to teach music at several institutions. She soon moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where she was head of the music department at Clark University until 1912. Racial tensions in the south in the 1920s convinced Price to move to Chicago, IL, in 1927. There Price seemed to have more professional opportunity for growth. She pursued further musical studies at the American Conservatory of Music and Chicago Musical College and established herself in the Chicago area as a teacher, pianist, and organist. In 1928, the music publisher G. Schirmer, published Price's Symphony No. 1 in E Minor. Shortly thereafter, in 1933, Price became the first black female composer to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra when conductor Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra played the world premiere of this work.

Price's Symphony No. 1 in E Minor consists of four movements:

I. *Allegro non troppo*, is in a traditional sonata form. The movement is reminiscent of the Czech composer Antonín Dvořák's Symphony No.9 "From the New World." Dvořák, in his role as Director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York, NY, had encouraged American composers to use the music of America in their writing rather than leaning so heavily on the European antecedents. Price took this advice to heart.

II. *Largo*, develops a solemn, hymn-like melody, first expressed in the brass section of the orchestra accompanied by rhythmic drumming on an African Djembe.

III. "Juba Dance," an ancestor of ragtime, takes its name from an African derived dance tradition, popularized and embraced by enslaved people in the antebellum South. Price's use of the "Juba" in her symphony continues the tradition of placing a dance as the third movement of a "classical" symphony (Haydn and Mozart often used a minuet).

IV. *Finale*, is a fast-paced rondo. Price uses the pentatonic scale, a melodic treatment endemic to African American musical traditions such as blues, jazz, and gospel.