

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-316-51176-3 — Margaret Bonds: The Montgomery Variations and Du Bois Credo

John Michael Cooper

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

MARGARET BONDS

In her lifetime, African American composer Margaret Bonds was classical music's most intrepid social-justice activist. Her *Montgomery Variations* (1964) and setting of W. E. B. Du Bois's iconic Civil Rights *Credo* (1965–7) were the musical summits of her activism. These works fell into obscurity after Bonds's death but were recovered and published in 2020. Since widely performed, they are finally gaining a recognition long denied. This incisive book situates *The Montgomery Variations* and *Credo* in their political and biographical contexts, providing an interdisciplinary exploration that brings notables including Harry Burleigh, W. E. B. and Shirley Graham Du Bois, Martin Luther King, Jr., Abbie Mitchell, Ned Rorem, and – especially – Langston Hughes into the works' collective ambit. The resulting brief, but instructive, appraisal introduces readers to two masterworks whose recovery is a modern musical milestone – and reveals their message to be one that, though born in the mid-twentieth century, speaks directly to our own time.

JOHN MICHAEL COOPER is Professor of Music at Southwestern University. He is the author of the first book-length biography of Margaret Bonds (forthcoming), the *Historical Dictionary of Romantic Music* (2nd ed., 2023), and three books on Felix Mendelssohn, as well as editor of numerous compositions by Bonds and Florence Price.

NEW CAMBRIDGE MUSIC HANDBOOKS

Series Editor

NICOLE GRIMES, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA–IRVINE

The New Cambridge Music Handbooks series provides accessible introductions to landmarks in music history, written by leading experts in their field. Encompassing a wide range of musical styles and genres, it embraces the music of hitherto under-represented creators as well as re-imagining works from the established canon. It will enrich the musical experience of students, scholars, listeners and performers alike.

Books in the Series

Hensel: String Quartet in E flat
Benedict Taylor

Berlioz: Symphonie Fantastique
Julian Rushton

Margaret Bonds: The Montgomery Variations and Du Bois Credo
John Michael Cooper

Schoenberg: 'Night Music', Verklärte Nacht and Erwartung
Arnold Whittall

Forthcoming Titles

Schubert: The 'Great' Symphony in C major
Suzannah Clark

Bach: The Cello Suites
Edward Klorman

Clara Schumann: Piano Concerto in A minor Op. 7
Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers

Donizetti: Lucia di Lammermoor
Mark Pottinger

Beethoven: String Quartet Op. 130
Elaine Sisman

Louise Farrenc: Nonet for Winds and Strings
Marie Sumner Lott

Cavalleria rusticana and Pagliacci
Alexandra Wilson

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-316-51176-3 — Margaret Bonds: The Montgomery Variations and Du Bois Credo

John Michael Cooper

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

MARGARET BONDS

The Montgomery Variations and Du Bois Credo

JOHN MICHAEL COOPER

Southwestern University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-316-51176-3 — Margaret Bonds: The Montgomery Variations and Du Bois Credo
 John Michael Cooper
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
 a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781316511763

DOI: 10.1017/9781009053792

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2024

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
 of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
 place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Cooper, John Michael, author.

TITLE: Margaret Bonds : the Montgomery variations and Du Bois 'Credo' / John
 Michael Cooper.

DESCRIPTION: [1.] | Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York : Cambridge University
 Press, 2023. | Series: MUHB new Cambridge music handbooks | Includes biblio-
 graphical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2023025808 (print) | LCCN 2023025809 (ebook) | ISBN
 9781316511763 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781009054577 (paperback) | ISBN
 9781009053792 (ebook)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Bonds, Margaret – Criticism and interpretation. | Bonds, Margaret.
 Montgomery variations. | Bonds, Margaret. Credo. | Civil rights movements – United
 States. | Music and race – United States – History – 20th century | Music – United
 States – 20th century – History and criticism.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC ML410.B69806 C65 2023 (print) | LCC ML410.B69806 (ebook) |
 DDC 780.92–dc23/eng/20230601

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023025808>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023025809>

ISBN 978-1-316-51176-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-05457-7 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
 or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
 publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
 remain, accurate or appropriate.

CONTENTS

<i>Figures</i>	page vi
<i>Music Examples</i>	vii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xix
Introduction	I
1 Margaret Bonds's Societal Mission and <i>The Montgomery Variations</i>	18
2 Hope, Divine Benevolence, and <i>The Montgomery Variations</i>	44
3 The Text and Music of the <i>Credo</i> Appendix: Text of W. E. B. Du Bois, <i>Credo</i>	77 115
4 Interpreting the <i>Credo</i> in Context	121
Epilogue: The Veil and Margaret Bonds's Syncretic Dual Perspective	146
<i>Index</i>	161

FIGURES

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------|
| 1.1 | Carl Van Vechten: <i>Portrait of Margaret Bonds</i> , October 10, 1956. Carl Van Vechten Papers Relating to African American Arts and Letters, James Weldon Johnson Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. ©Van Vechten Trust. | page 19 |
| 2.1 | Original and revised programs for <i>The Montgomery Variations</i> . | 47 |
| 2.2 | First page of the score of <i>The Montgomery Variations</i> . Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Georgetown University Libraries, Washington, DC, shelfmark GTM-130530, Box 12, folder 8. Used by permission. | 56 |
| 2.3 | Symmetrical layout of <i>The Montgomery Variations</i> . | 68 |
| 3.1 | First page of the score of <i>Credo</i> . Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Georgetown University Libraries, Washington, DC, shelfmark GTM-130530, Box 18, folder 5. Used by permission. | 81 |
| 3.2 | <i>Credo</i> : Structure of No. 5. | 93 |
| 3.3 | <i>Credo</i> : Archlike structure of Du Bois's text and Bonds's music. | 108 |
| 4.1 | W. E. B. Du Bois and Shirley Graham Du Bois on his 87th birthday, February 23, 1955. Portrait by photographer Lotte Jacobi in New York. W. E. B. Du Bois Center, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Used by permission. | 122 |

MUSIC EXAMPLES

2.1	<i>The Montgomery Variations</i> , I: “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me” (theme).	page 58
2.2	<i>The Montgomery Variations</i> , II: (a) mm. 18–21; (b) mm. 50–56; (c) mm. 59–64, trombone solo; (d) mm. 81–85.	61
2.3	<i>The Montgomery Variations</i> , III: (a) mm. 28–33; (b) mm. 67–73.	62
2.4	<i>The Montgomery Variations</i> , IV: (a) mm. 9–22; (b) mm. 58–69.	63
2.5	<i>The Montgomery Variations</i> , V: mm. 41–45.	64
2.6	<i>The Montgomery Variations</i> , VI: mm. 32–39.	65
2.7	<i>The Montgomery Variations</i> , VII: (a) mm. 28–39; (b) mm. 74–86.	66
3.1	<i>Credo</i> : “I Believe in God,” mm. 1–13.	84
3.2	<i>Credo</i> : “Especially Do I Believe in the Negro Race,” mm. 56–72.	86
3.3	<i>Credo</i> : “I Believe in Pride of Race,” mm. 102–109.	88
3.4	<i>Credo</i> : “I Believe in Service,” mm. 147–53.	90
3.5	<i>Credo</i> : “I Believe in the Devil and His Angels,” mm. 188–96.	91
3.6	<i>Credo</i> : “I Believe in the Prince of Peace,” (a) mm. 218–23; (b) mm. 236–39; (c) climax at “the death of that strength,” mm. 244–53.	94
3.7	<i>Credo</i> : “I Believe in Liberty for All Men,” mm. 300–13.	97
3.8	<i>Credo</i> : “I Believe in Liberty for All Men,” (a) mm. 321–36; (b) mm. 339–41; (c) 388–98.	99
3.9	<i>Credo</i> : “I Believe in Liberty for All Men,” mm. 381–84.	100
3.10	<i>Credo</i> : “I Believe in Patience,” mm. 434–56.	102

PREFACE

On the face of it this book is about one composer and two pieces of music. That much is true, but it is only the surface. For just behind that composer, Margaret Bonds (1913–72), stands W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963), one of the modern era’s boldest and most brilliant scholars of race relations and advocates for racial justice and social justice generally. Alongside the two of them are Abbie Mitchell (1864–1960), the pioneering German-Jewish/African American actress and soprano who performed the role of Clara in the premiere of Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*; Langston Hughes (1902–67), Bonds’s closest friend and career-long collaborator; and Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–68), whose poetic eloquence and visionary commitment to nonviolent racial justice inspired the whole world in the late 1950s and 1960s, and continues to do so. Their voices extend from the 1880s into the 1970s and still resonate powerfully today, and the geographic terrain through which those voices resound in these works envoices peoples in not only the United States, but also Europe, Africa, and (especially for Bonds) Asia. Finally, this formidable cast of characters holds aloft, in music and word, act and idea, the banner of the quest for racial justice, gender justice, and global equality, a banner that few readers of this book will regard as inimical.

That is a great deal of chronological, conceptual, ideological, and of course musical ground to cover in this short handbook, but it is fertile soil. This might seem self-evident, given the social intensity and political energy of the US Civil Rights Movement that occasioned the two works that are featured here, but it owes also to the power of Du Bois’s thinking and writing, the richness of Bonds’s hitherto largely unexplored correspondence, and not least the brilliance and depth of her music itself. Bonds was a passionate social-justice advocate and a prolific correspondent, and her musical imagination was commensurately voluble. This short

Preface

book serves as an invitation to delve deeper and learn more about the prodigious mind and imagination and the even more remarkable music of the extraordinary Margaret Bonds.

Rediscovering or Recovering?

Latter-day commentators sometimes portray a recent resurgence of interest in composers of the African diaspora (most notably Margaret Bonds and Florence Price) as a “rediscovery,”¹ but a more nuanced approach helps to understand how two so obviously important works as *The Montgomery Variations* and the *Credo* have remained largely unheard for more than half a century despite their obvious topicality in the musical discourses of the 1960s, their importance in Bonds’s output, and their timeliness today. Although many constituencies of classical music are predisposed to view previously obscure mid-twentieth-century African American composers and their music as relatively recent Black incursions into patently White spaces, and thus as “rediscovered,” this perspective and its resultant Othering of African diasporic composers (including Margaret Bonds) are artifices of the systemic racism of White concert music’s culture and historiography, especially in the United States: a society more discomfited by the acronym *BLM* than by the acronym *KKK* will naturally regard Black lives and Black voices as outsiders to the hallowed halls of Western classical music. In fact, these composers’ names were never forgotten in Black communities, and some of their music has never been forgotten, either.² To speak of a “rediscovery” of Margaret Bonds or any other Black composer is thus inappropriate, for such an assertion perpetuates the White gaze that marginalized those composers to begin with.

There is, though, a Margaret Bonds to be *recovered*.³ Although the canon-obsessed establishment of classical music marginalized her during the half-century following her death, that neglect never quite reached the point of erasure. During that same half-century, Black scholars and allies continued to explore Bonds’s genius in their writings, Black performers and allies kept her music alive by including the handful of familiar pieces in recitals and recordings, audiences and critics continued to respond enthusiastically, and

Preface

archivists and librarians assiduously preserved the priceless music manuscripts, letters, press clippings, postcards, photographs, and tape-recorded interviews that document her rich legacy.⁴ The two works that are the centerpiece of this book are a case in point. After the death in 2011 of Bonds's daughter, Djane Richardson (b. 1946), a sizable trove of Bonds documents went to a book fair in Washington, DC, failed to sell, and was left beside a dumpster when the fair closed. Found by a collector, it ended up in the Booth Family Center for Special Collections at Georgetown University (Washington, DC).⁵ And this very collection is the one that contains the sole surviving autographs for *The Montgomery Variations* and the orchestral version of the *Credo*, as well as a copy of the piano-vocal score of the latter containing autograph annotations from the composer. With their autographs having been literally rescued from the landfill by a collector and a university library, both works are now published.⁶

Music history's other posthumous recoveries offer room for optimism where the recovery of Margaret Bonds's legacy is concerned, for the processes of recovering that legacy resemble those by which early nineteenth-century Europeans (German and other) recovered the legacy of J. S. Bach – whose influence on *The Montgomery Variations* and the *Credo* is, as we shall see, significant, and whom Bonds herself referred to as “the father of all in Music.”⁷ Although the 1829 Berlin performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* are sometimes portrayed as a “rediscovery” that catapulted Bach into the public limelight and launched the Bach revival, the cultural memory of that composer and his legacy were in fact carefully stewarded over the preceding decades by his pupils, his sons, and a close-knit network of performers and institutions.⁸ Agricola, Kirnberger, Kollmann, and C. P. E. Bach (among others) cultivated a continuing presence for Bach's teachings and style in their treatises. Fanny von Arnstein and Sarah Itzig Levy kept his music alive in their influential salons. Rochlitz and Forkel formulated biographical accounts that cast Bach as a saintly summit of a golden age of German music, while publishers such as Simrock (Bonn) and Breitkopf & Härtel (Leipzig) published selections of his music. And performers and institutions such as Muzio Clementi, Samuel Wesley, C. F. Horn, and of course the Berlin

Preface

Singakademie under the directorship of Fasch and Zelter ensured that the sounds of his music never passed into complete silence.

This conservationist work aptly parallels the means by which Margaret Bonds's name and memory have been sustained in the past half-century. And so, just as Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's 1829 performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* and Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel's Bach performances in her *Sonntagsmusiken* were not rediscoveries at all, but rather stations in a decades-long process of recovery, we may hope that Margaret Bonds will also be able to reenter the public musical discourse with the dynamic force and brilliance for which she was known in her own time. The stakes could hardly be higher – for the cast of characters listed at the beginning of these remarks, like the two works that form the centerpiece of this book and Margaret Bonds herself, gave proud and unswerving voice to the quest for racial justice, gender justice, and global equality.

To ascribe a societal mission of the sort that motivated Bonds to Sebastian Bach would be, at best, a stretch. Nevertheless, even setting aside Bonds's reverence for Bach and his influence (along with that of Richard Strauss) on the two works that are the subject of this book, Bach and Bonds both had to negotiate musically disparate stylistic spheres in constructing their own respective public identities. In Bach's music this negotiation plays out primarily through his essays in German, French, and Italian styles and his frequent contrapositions of *stile antico* versus *stile moderno*. Stylistic negotiations of these contrasting musical spheres are integral or even essential to his art, and central to the veneration unanimously afforded today's recovered and more authentic Bach. Similarly, the stylistic eclecticism of Margaret Bonds's music is a defining feature of her identity and part of the immediacy of her musical language – and, indeed, her deft reconciliations of the incongruities between popular and classical, Black and White, spiritual and jazz and blues, deeply rooted in her experiences in Black churches, where in most denominations (including A. M. E., Baptist, Methodist, and Roman Catholic) those genres freely commingled, are rarely if ever surpassed in their brilliance,

Preface

anywhere in any repertoire. For example, *The Ballad of the Brown King*, while outwardly a classical cantata, is suffused with call-and-response textures, calypso rhythms, gospel, and jazz; Bonds later recalled that “it’s really jazz,”⁹ and while composing it she surprised even herself with the depth of this stylistic synthesis, writing to Langston Hughes: “Tonight after I finished writing ‘Sing of the King Who Was Tall and Brown’ [No. VII of the revised version] I realized it can be done by the Modern Jazz Quartet without any words.”¹⁰

But there is an important difference: Bach’s negotiations of stylistic alterities were strictly voluntary, and Bonds’s, while at least partly intentional, were inevitably bound up with the relentless segregational musical practices of the institutions of concert music and the world that she, as a woman of color, occupied to her dying day. That world prescribed certain genres and styles – chiefly blues, dances, gospel, jazz, and spirituals – for Black composers and “small forms” for women composers; but for Blacks and women to cross the color line and gender line, writing in classical idioms and/or larger forms, was for them, in the eyes of Whites, to transgress. Such transgressions, inevitably, were dismissed or ignored altogether, and what headway they made in breaking through the invisible but potent barriers that kept composers of color and women on the peripheries of the institutions of male-dominated White classical music was generally doomed to historiographic erasure – the sort of virtual erasure that has been the fate of most of Margaret Bonds’s music (including *The Montgomery Variations* and *Credo*).

Margaret Bonds’s refusal to be kept out of the White-dominated concert hall was a by-product of her Black feminism – an outlook that she shared with influential music critic Nora Holt (1885–1974). As is well known, Black feminism is not an outgrowth of non-Black feminism or any other movement but was born of the unique fusion of racism, classism, and sexism that Black women constantly face. It acknowledges that Black women’s needs and perspectives differ profoundly from those of White women and Black men, and it argues that these forces of oppression, because of their inseparability, must be fought simultaneously.

Preface

It is an outlook, in other words, decidedly resistant to deferential obeisance to racially delineated patriarchal spaces. Despite personal disagreements,¹¹ Bonds clearly respected Holt's navigation of these treacherous spaces and may have followed her lead. Holt, in addition to her work as a soprano, pianist, composer, and music critic, was cofounder of the National Association of Negro Musicians, an organization in which Bonds, too, exerted leadership throughout her professional career. More substantively, Holt's two-pronged strategy for breaking through the barriers that kept Blacks out of White classical institutions may also be applied to Bonds.¹² One prong of this strategy was pedagogy and what Lucy Caplan has termed Holt's "communal approach to knowledge production"¹³ among African Americans – Holt through her criticism and her long-running radio show, Bonds through her teaching and her frequent lectures. The other prong – a recognition of the "generative possibilities of racial difference"¹⁴ – is more complex. Acknowledging the virtually inevitable inauthenticity of White representations of Black identity in music, it affirmed that Black artists' attempts to "whitewash" their music in order to assimilate into dominant White idioms was inherently false and doomed to aesthetic failure because of their denial of the feature that was actually their music's greatest aesthetic strength: its Blackness.

The first of these issues and the problems it produced is encountered in Bonds's correspondence as early as 1937, in her response to what she called "a lousy Negro play written by a white man."¹⁵ The second is reflected in the overtness of Bonds's cultivation of Black idioms within genres and styles that are stereotypically White: the use of calypso, gospel, and jazz in a classical cantata in *The Ballad of the Brown King* and of an African American spiritual as the cantus firmus in a Bachian chorale cantata in *Simon Bore the Cross* (see Chapter 1); employing a spiritual and Black experience as theme and subject of a large and cyclical orchestral variation set in *The Montgomery Variations* (see Chapter 2); the importance of the genre of gospel song to the *Credo* (see Chapter 3). These transgressive border-crossings, each rich and complex in its own way, are arguably the most valuable tools modern scholars and other musicians have at our disposal as we seek to recover the nearly erased legacy of Margaret Bonds on her own, authentic

xiv

Preface

terms rather than in some romanticized or otherwise anachronistic fashion.

Although the ramifications of these issues cannot be fully explored here, suffice it to note that they are (among other things) sociological and historiographic, not just compositional and stylistic. Because of the profoundly segregated structures of life, including musical life, in the US (the political and racial arena that was home to the text, events, and music of *The Montgomery Variations* and *Credo*), the use of music or musical styles associated with one side of the color line in the context of the other was inherently transgressive as a political gesture. For example, the use of a spiritual was never *just* the use of a spiritual, nor was it *just* a religious gesture or even *just* a communal religious one. Rather, because spirituals (dubbed “the sorrow songs” by W. E. B. Du Bois¹⁶) were emblematic of Black Americans’ ancestral heritage, of the importance of the Black church in the lives of many African Americans, and of the lived experiences and lived sufferings of Black folk generally, for Margaret Bonds to use the spiritual “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me” as the basis of *The Montgomery Variations* was not only germane to that work’s program, but also transgressive. By inserting into the institutions of concert music a Black presence that was by convention and (in the South) by law segregated out from those institutions, it represented a lance thrown down before White domination in those institutions. The same is true of her allusions to gospel songs, jazz, and spirituals. As an African American and a woman, Bonds lived with the realities of systemic racism and systemic sexism every day of her life, and her correspondence and biography demonstrate that she chafed at them, fought them at every turn. That resistance was amply modeled for her in the Black churches in which she was raised, and where she worked as choir director for much of her career, for as Portia K. Maulsby and others have shown, Black churches of various denominations – A. M. E., Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic – cultivated both stereotypically “White” (i.e., Euro-American classical) and Black repertoires.¹⁷ The meaningfulness of her pointed insertions of (as it were) an unwelcome dark-skinned female guest into the sacralized domain of the

Preface

musical canon, dominated as it was by White males, should not be underestimated.

Nor should we forget that Bonds, ever a voracious consumer of music and one whose education at Northwestern University included at least four music history survey courses, would have been aware of the music and ideas of Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904).¹⁸ Her interest in the Bohemian composer, who was a cultural outsider to the German-dominated musical landscape of his day, would have derived partly from his brilliant importing of Bohemian idioms into the German-dominated genres of opera, string quartet, and symphony (a stylistic feature that resonated with her own integration of Black and White idioms). More important, though, would have been the obvious connections between her own career-long promotion of a sense of pride in African American identity in music – in the sense of racial, cultural, and historical memory and preservation that had inspired Joseph M. Trotter’s seminal *Music and Some Highly Musical People* already in 1878,¹⁹ and what Joseph Horowitz has called “Dvořák’s Prophecy”: the 1893 assertion, probably rooting, through Harry T. Burleigh, to Trotter’s book, that “the future music of [the United States] must be founded upon what are called the negro melodies,” which “must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States” and which offered “all that is needed for a great and noble school of music.”²⁰ As we shall see, Bonds possessed a strong sense of personal mission and considered it her “Destiny” (upper-case *D*) to “go farther” than those who had preceded her in pursuing that mission. In view of her close relationship to Florence B. Price, whose own connections with Dvořák’s music are often noted, and who had echoed Dvořák in her statement that “a national musical idiom” and a truly American folk music existed “in the Negro spirituals,”²¹ Bonds’s own musical celebration of “the negro melodies” and other Black vernacular styles is probably more than an exploration of her own personal heritage (though it is certainly this as well). It is also a historiographic assertion of self and, because of its deep syncretism of disparate idioms, bolder and more brilliant than anything submitted by Price, Burleigh, William Levi Dawson, R. Nathaniel Dett, or any of Dvořák’s other

xvi

Preface

conceptual progeny. The musical contributions of Margaret Bonds offered her contemporaries a remarkable and vivid glimpse of what American classical music might have looked like had Trotter's and Dvořák's vision been heeded rather than pushed aside by what Horowitz calls "the modernist juggernaut" – the mid-twentieth-century trend toward modernism as defining aesthetic stance and, ultimately, arbiter of perceived historical significance in music and the other arts.²² Now recovered after decades of marginalization, they also open up new possibilities to our own world – and *The Montgomery Variations* and *Credo*, rising from the ideological and social terrain brilliantly mapped by W. E. B. Du Bois, stand as twin summits of the musical syncretism and societal mission she embarked on in her collaboration with Langston Hughes, beckoning us to reach for their heights.

A Note on This Book

The elements of the book are organized with an archlike symmetry modeled on that of Bonds's *Credo*. It is divided into two parts, the first centered on *The Montgomery Variations* and the second centered on the *Credo*. The center line in this bipartite division is straddled by Chapters 2 and 3, which deal with the two compositions from analytical perspectives. Enfolding these, Chapters 1 and 4 discuss the works from primarily contextual viewpoints. Finally, that main body is framed by an Introduction and Epilogue. The Introduction summarizes the major events and issues in Bonds's life, including the issues that she faced as a social activist and Black woman in the turbulent twentieth century. The Epilogue returns to the issue of the deep segregation of concert life in the United States touched on in this Preface and explores a particularly brilliant and audacious gambit that Bonds undertook in these works: during a time of extraordinary heat and violence surrounding gender justice and racial justice, Bonds, an African American woman, solicited the overwhelmingly White male corps of performers who dominated US orchestras to join with her in giving musical voice to expansive and powerful musical celebrations of racial equality, Black music, and the beauty and power of Blackness generally.

Preface

This book has been written with an eye to the newness of the *New Cambridge Music Handbooks* series and the broader cultural footprint offered by the series in its reimagined form. These considerations pose an opportunity, but they also necessitate new solutions to issues that did not previously exist. Most obviously, one cannot assume that readers will have the sort of familiarity with, and easy access to, the works that are central to this volume that readers had for the canonical works, most of them in the public domain, that were central to the original Cambridge Music Handbooks series. This means that many examples are necessary in order to illustrate essential points concerning music that remains unfamiliar to most readers. Examples for *The Montgomery Variations* are my own piano reductions based on the full score, and those from the *Credo* are compressed from Margaret Bonds's own piano-vocal score for that work.²³ My thanks to the heirs of Margaret Bonds and Hildegard Publishing Company for permission to use these materials.

A word on terminology is also necessary. Race is a social construct, not a biological one, and in the United States – the home of Margaret Bonds, and of Langston Hughes and W. E. B. Du Bois until Du Bois moved to Ghana in 1961 – it is so nearly synonymous with caste that in popular usage it has all but completely eclipsed the latter.²⁴ Even so, Bonds, Hughes, and Du Bois all understood race as a phenomenon both social and biological. They never spoke of caste and spoke of what Du Bois called “the darker races” in terminology that has now fallen from use. Because this book adopts a consciously synchronic perspective, it reproduces their verbiage without comment. My own words mirror the insufficiency of the social artifice itself: “Black,” “Blacks,” “Black folk,” and related terms are commonly used in accordance with current parlance, even though the designated persons are of many different shades and colors; “African Americans” denotes Blacks in or of the United States. Readers may sense my discomfort with these terms, all of which are of dubious accuracy and appropriateness at one time or another; for this I can only apologize.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I wish to thank Mr. Orestes Richardson and the heirs of Margaret Bonds for their kind permission to publish my editions of the two works discussed in this book, and for their general stewardship of the legacy of Margaret Bonds. Special thanks also to Hildegard Publishing Company for permission to include music examples based on their editions of those works.²⁵ I also thank the Booth Family Center for Special Collections at Georgetown University (Washington, DC) for granting access to, and permission to use, the autographs for those two compositions. For access to and permission to use other valuable sources I thank the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection at Yale University (New Haven), the Carl Van Vechten Trust, the W. E. B. Du Bois Center at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, and the Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the New York Public Library. At the University of Colorado–Boulder Libraries, I especially thank Susan R. Thomas, Director of American Music Research Center, and David M. Hays, Archivist of Rare and Distinctive Collections. A great debt of gratitude is due to Heidi Marshall, Head of Archives and Special Collections at Columbia College (Chicago), for her assistance in accessing the priceless materials in the Center for Black Music Research Collection in that library. Special gratitude is due to Charla Burlenda Wilson, Archivist for the Black Experience in the Northwestern University Libraries, and Jason Nargis, Distinctive Collections Librarian at Northwestern University, for assistance in all manner of inquiries pertaining to Northwestern’s rich documentation of the life and achievements of Margaret Bonds. To Du Bois scholar Reiland Rabaka, Professor of African, African American, and Caribbean Studies in the Department of Ethnic Studies and founder of the Center for African and African American Studies at the University

Acknowledgments

of Colorado–Boulder, I owe many thanks for assistance in coming to terms with the ever-rich and unceasingly important legacies of W. E. B. Du Bois as they bear on this book. Further thanks for myriad forms of support go to Professor Jonathan Bellman (University of Northern Colorado–Greeley), Professor Frederick Binkholder (Georgetown University), pianist Lara Downes (California), Professor Sandra Jean Graham (Babson College), Professor Anna Harwell Celenza (Johns Hopkins University), Professor Angel Gil-Ordoñez (Georgetown University), Professor Jason Hoogerhyde (Southwestern University), Professor Phil Hopkins (Southwestern University), Joao Martins (University of California–Irvine), Professor Shana Thomas Mashego (George Washington University), Professor Brian Moon (University of Arizona), Professor Alicia L. Moore (Southwestern University), Professor Denise Neary (Royal Irish Academy of Music), Anthony E. Philpott (Raleigh, North Carolina), Professor Douglass Seaton (Florida State University), and Professor Kimberly A. Smith (Southwestern University). For the invitation to contribute this book to the New Cambridge Music Handbooks series I thank Professor Nicole Grimes (University of California–Irvine) and Kate Brett at Cambridge University Press; and for shepherding the book through to completion I thank Nigel Graves, Sharmila Sivaram, and Makenzi Crouch for bringing her expertise to bear in helping the manuscript to live up to its potential. Finally, special thanks go to Cindy Cooper, who has not only been there every step of the way in the conception and creation of this book but also has been a constant source of support, and of patient and insightful feedback. To say that this book would not exist without her is an understatement.

I never knew her, never even met her. But if it's true that every book is ultimately a tale of gratitude translated into other terms, then the tale of this book begins with Ms. Ella Mae Long (ca. 1903–91). My mother's recollections of Ella's bravery, wisdom, teaching, and love deep in the Jim Crow South of the 1940s are the earliest stories I remember having heard, and they brought inspiration to my young and uncomprehending heart. Ms. Long was one of those courageous souls, so visionary in so many ways, who participated in the Great Migration. She was born in Anniston,

xx

Acknowledgments

Alabama, worked for a time as a domestic servant in Atlanta, then went on to earn a nursing degree from the Tuskegee Institute and ultimately become head of surgical nurses at People’s Hospital in St. Louis – a Black hospital and, in the segregated health care system of the segregated United States until the mid-1960s, the only medical facility in St. Louis that allowed African American physicians and surgeons to treat private patients. My mother was finally able to locate and reconnect with Ms. Long in an eldercare facility near St. Louis in 1990, visiting her several times during the final year of her life. What Ms. Long did after People’s Hospital closed in 1978 is unclear, but this much I know: through my mother’s stories and the wisdom, strength, and love she taught to her, Ella Long is the soil in which this book roots. My gratitude for the richness of that soil is deep and humble.

Finally, I thank my mother, Mrs. Jacqueline Cooper, the dedicatee of this book, for those stories – for making them a part of my own story and sharing her own wisdom, courage, and love with me.

Notes

1. The term “rediscovery” is most broadly and frequently applied to Florence B. Price, whose music, like Bonds’s, is experiencing a significant rebound in public musical life. See for example Alex Ross, “The Rediscovery of Florence Price,” *The New Yorker*, Feb. 5, 2018.
2. For example, Bonds’s arrangements of the spirituals “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hand” and “You Can Tell the World” have remained common in performance, as have her “Three Dream Portraits,” “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” and “Troubled Water.” Many lexica of African American composers and women composers have mentioned Bonds (e.g., Mildred Denby Green, *Black Women Composers: A Genesis* [Boston, MA: Twayne, 1983]), and she figures in narratives such as Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997). These studies generally repeat the same, necessarily small corpus of basic facts, but an important contribution was made in 2007 with Helen Walker-Hill’s *From Spirituals to Symphonies: African American Women Composers and Their Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), which included a full chapter on Bonds that went beyond anything achieved previously.

Acknowledgments

3. “Recovery” is a more satisfactory word than the popularly used “rediscovery” for several reasons – not least because in order to be “rediscovered,” one must first be “discovered,” a term that has never been and should never be applied to Bonds, Florence Price, or any of the other usual subjects for whom that term is popularly reserved.
4. At this writing, the best work-list and bibliography of these sources are still those in Helen Walker-Hill’s biographical chapter (*From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 172–88).
5. See Anne Midgette, “A Forgotten Voice for Civil Rights Rises in Song at Georgetown,” *The Washington Post*, November 10, 2017. On the Georgetown University Bonds papers see also Anna Harwell Celenza, *Margaret Bonds and Langston Hughes: A Musical Friendship* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Library, 2016).
6. Margaret Bonds, *Credo*, ed. John Michael Cooper (Worcester, MA: Hildegard Publishing, 2020); Bonds, *The Montgomery Variations*, ed. John Michael Cooper (Worcester, MA: Hildegard Publishing, 2020).
7. Margaret Bonds, “Lecture for THE QUEST CLUB,” Georgetown University Libraries, Washington, DC, Booth Family Center for Special Collections (shelfmark GTM-130530, Box 18, folder 4), 2.
8. On the Bach revival, see (most generally) Nicholas Temperley and Peter Wollny, “Bach Revival,” *Grove Music Online* (2001; accessed September 29, 2021); further, Christine Blanken, “Dokumente der Wiener Bach-Pflege” in *Bach: Beiträge zur Rezeptionsgeschichte, Interpretationsgeschichte und Pädagogik – Drei Symposien im Rahmen des 83. Bachfestes der Neuen Bachgesellschaft in Salzburg 2008: Bericht*, ed. Thomas Hochradner and Ulrich Leisinger (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2010), 23–49; Beatrix Borchardt, “Einschreiben in eine männliche Genealogie? Überlegungen zur Bach-Rezeption Fanny Hensels” in “Zu gross, zu unerreichbar”: *Bach-Rezeption im Zeitalter Mendelssohns und Schumanns*, ed. Anselm Hartinger, Christoph Wolff, and Peter Wollny (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2007), 59–76; Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen, “Kantatenkomposition in der ‘Hauptstadt von Sebastian Bach’: Fanny Hensels geistliche Chorwerke und die Berliner Bach-Tradition” in *Fanny Hensel, geb. Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Das Werk*, ed. Martina Helmig (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1997), 115–29; Philip Olleson, “Samuel Wesley and the English Bach Awakening” in *The English Bach Awakening: Knowledge of J. S. Bach and His Music in England (1750–1830)*, ed. Michael Kassler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 251–313; Christoph Wolff, “Sara Levy’s Musical Salon and Her Bach Collection” in *Sara Levy’s World: Gender, Judaism, and the Bach Tradition in Enlightenment Berlin*,

Acknowledgments

- ed. Rebecca Cypress and Nancy Sinkoff (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2018), 39–51.
9. Margaret Bonds, interview with James Hatch, cited in Ashley Jennifer Jackson, “Margaret Bonds and The Ballad of the Brown King: An Historical Overview and Analysis” (DMA diss., The Juilliard School, 2014), 70.
 10. Letter from Bonds (New York) to Hughes (New York), October 1, 1960. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale Collection of American Literature, James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes papers (shelfmark JWJ 26, Box 16, folder 374: no. 217). Citations to this Collection will henceforth be cited as “Yale JWJ 26,” followed by the box number, folder number, and (as applicable) item number within the folder. On Bonds’s use of Black musical idioms in *The Ballad of the Brown King*, see especially Jackson, “Margaret Bonds and The Ballad of the Brown King,” ch. 15 (pp. 70–80).
 11. Bonds’s correspondence with Langston Hughes reveals persistent tensions between her and Holt.
 12. Lucy Caplan, “‘Strange What Cosmopolites Music Makes of Us’: Classical Music, the Black Press, and Nora Douglas Holt’s Black Feminist Audiotopia,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 14 (2020): 308–36.
 13. Caplan, “Strange What Cosmopolites,” 309.
 14. Caplan, “Strange What Cosmopolites,” esp. 324–25.
 15. Yale JWJ 26, Box 16, folder 370: no. 20. For more information on this letter and the play that prompted it, see Ch. 1, p. 24–26.
 16. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1903), 250–64.
 17. See Portia K. Maultsby, *Afro-American Religious Music: A Study in Musical Diversity*, Papers of the Hymn Society of America 35 (Springfield, OH: The Hymn Society of America, 1981); further Shana Thomas Mashego, “Music from the Soul of Woman: The Influence of the African American Presbyterian and Methodist Traditions on the Classical Compositions of Florence Price and Dorothy Rudd Moore” (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 2010).
 18. See n. 2 in Chapter 4 for more information regarding the Northwestern University music-history curriculum during Bonds’s time there.
 19. James M. Trotter, *Music and Some Highly Musical People: Containing Brief Chapters on I. A Description of Music. II. The Music of Nature. III. A Glance at the History of Music. IV. The Power, Beauty, and Uses of Music. Following Which Are Given Sketches of the Lives of Remarkable Musicians of the Colored Race. With Portraits, and an Appendix Containing Copies of*

Acknowledgments

- Music Composed by Colored Men* (Boston, MA: Lee and Shepard, 1878).
20. See Joseph Horowitz, *Dvořák's Prophecy and the Vexed Fate of Black Classical Music* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2021), 1–9, esp. 7–8. As Horowitz points out (p. 205), Michael Beckerman has shown that this article was probably authored by James Creelman.
 21. See Douglas W. Shadle, *Antonín Dvořák's New World Symphony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 159.
 22. Horowitz, *Dvořák's Prophecy*, 202.
 23. Bonds wrote the vocal parts in four separate staves, but this book compresses these into two staves instead. In the *Credo* examples, the vocal parts follow the latest authorized version – i.e., they are given as in the autograph full orchestral score housed in the Booth Family Center for Special Collections in the Georgetown University Library – while the piano part is taken from Bonds's autograph piano part.
 24. See, most recently, Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (New York: Random House, 2020).
 25. Margaret Bonds, *Credo* (piano-vocal score, full score, and parts available for rental through Theodore Presser), ed. John Michael Cooper (Worcester, MA: Hildegard Publishing, 2020); Margaret Bonds, *The Montgomery Variations* (score and parts available for rental through Theodore Presser), ed. John Michael Cooper (Worcester, MA: Hildegard Publishing, 2020); Margaret Bonds, *Credo* (piano-vocal score, octavo), ed. John Michael Cooper (Worcester, MA: Hildegard Publishing, 2022); Margaret Bonds, “Especially Do I Believe in the Negro Race” (*Credo*, No. 2), ed. John Michael Cooper (Worcester, MA: Hildegard Publishing, 2022); Margaret Bonds, *I Believe* (“Especially Do I Believe in the Negro Race,” from *Credo*), ed. John Michael Cooper, arr. for piano solo by Lara Downes (Worcester, MA: Hildegard Publishing, 2023); Margaret Bonds, *Credo* (study score), ed. John Michael Cooper (Worcester, MA: Hildegard Publishing, 2023).