

Samantha Ege launches Florence Price piano album on International Women's Day in streamed concert from Lincoln College, Oxford



Monday 8 March 2021, 17:00

The Black Chicago Renaissance Women: Lives & Legacies in Music
Online from Lincoln College, Oxford; streamed on the [TORCH YouTube Channel](#)

Florence Price *Fantasie Nègre No. 2 in G Minor; Fantasie Nègre No. 3 in F Minor*
Nora Douglas Holt *Negro Dance*
Betty Jackson King *Four Seasonal Sketches*
Margaret Bonds *Spiritual Suite*

Monday 8 March 2021 (digital release), 9 April 2021 (CD release)

Fantasie Nègre: The Piano Music of Florence Price
LORELT | LNT144

Price *Fantasie Nègres No. 1-4* **FIRST FULL RECORDING**; *Untitled Sketches No. 1, 2 & 3*;
Snapshots: Lake Mirror, Moon Behind a Cloud, Flame

Dr Samantha Ege piano

Musicologist and pianist **Samantha Ege** launches an album of piano music by the trailblazing yet overshadowed African-American composer **Florence Price** on **International Women's Day**. Her album includes the **first full recording** of all four of Price's virtuosic *Fantasie Nègre* showpieces, following her rediscovery of Price's *Fantasie Nègre* No. 3.

Launching the album, Ege will give a lecture-recital on Monday 8 March 2021, streamed on YouTube by **TORCH** (The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities) from **Lincoln College, Oxford**, where she is a Junior Research Fellow. During her International Women's Day recital, Samantha Ege traces the lives and legacies of Black women composers in Chicago, contextualising the music of Florence Price, Nora Douglas Holt, Margaret Bonds, and Betty Jackson King, which represents the foundations of a vibrant creative network, in the transformative movement of the Negro Renaissance.

Following its digital release on International Women's Day, Ege's album will also be released on CD on **9 April 2021** – in honour of the composer's birthday – on the **LORELT** label, dedicated to recording work by important and neglected composers.

Dr Samantha Ege is a Junior Research Fellow at the University of Oxford, and a leading interpreter and scholar of Florence Price. On her 2018 debut album, *Four Women*, Ege paired Florence Price's Sonata in E minor with solo piano works by Vítězslava Kaprálová, Ethel Bilsland and Margaret Bonds, who debuted many of Price's piano works and to whom the *Fantasie Nègre* No. 1 is dedicated; she continues to highlight composers from underrepresented backgrounds.

Florence Price (1887-1953) is best known for her Symphony No. 1 in E minor, performed by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933, the **first African-American woman to have her music presented by a major American orchestra**. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas and taught by her mother, Price graduated from the New England Conservatory aged 19, with two degrees in piano teaching and organ performance. While there, she presented herself as Mexican as her black racial identity could preclude her success.

Race riots and routine lynchings forced Price and her family to move to Chicago's South Side after her studies, where she found a vibrant community of African American musicians, composers, critics, and sponsors; Michelle Obama was later raised in the same area. Her first symphony premiered to rave reviews following the intervention of the African American community leader Maude Roberts George, after taking first place at the Rodman Wanamaker Music Awards. Price, George, and a number of other women including Margaret Bonds and Nora Holt belonged to what would later be recognised as the Black Chicago Renaissance.

Price's 300 compositions are characterised by their blend of European Romantic idioms and those drawn from African American traditional music, which she began to explore while studying in Boston under George Whitefield Chadwick, following a comfortable childhood steeped in the classical canon. As an accomplished keyboard player, her solo piano music exemplifies her command of the instrument as well as providing a snapshot of her unique compositional language.

Included on the album are Price's four highly romantic and expressive *Fantasie Nègre* showpieces, including the first recording of Price's *Fantasie Nègre* No. 3, recently discovered by Samantha Ege while undertaking research in Arkansas. Here, Ege performs the full set of virtuosic Fantasies – envisaged as a series, like Brahms's Fantasies, and as an expression of cultural heritage like Albéniz's Iberia suite – on disc for the first time, and in their original versions.

The *Fantasie Nègres* are set to disc alongside three untitled sketches by Price, light salon-style pieces that contrast her substantial Fantasies, and three impressionistic Snapshots.

Price's music was sung by the ground-breaking African American contralto Marian Anderson to an audience of over 75,000 on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday, 1939, following the intervention of Eleanor Roosevelt (as Marian Anderson was unable to perform in Washington D.C.'s Constitution Hall due to segregation).

Sadly, Price faced continued barriers due to her race and gender, working as a composer and teacher until her death in Chicago in 1953. Much of her work came perilously close to being lost following her death, with a collection of her manuscripts rediscovered in a dilapidated house in St. Anne, Illinois in 2009; it remains seriously underrepresented on disc.

Dr Samantha Ege said:

"As a young pianist, discovering Florence Price made me feel visible. She belonged to a long legacy of black composers who channelled their African heritage into classical forms. The classical mainstream must now work to realize the future that Price no doubt hoped to see, one where the concert hall welcomes black classical artists, not only posthumously."

The recording is supported by the Ambache Charitable Trust, the Music Department of the University of Surrey, the Michael Zilkha Trust at Lincoln College, and the Rebecca Clarke Society



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Price *Fantasia Nègre No. 1 in E Minor*

Price *Fantasia Nègre No. 2 in G Minor*

Price *Untitled Sketches No. 1, 2 & 3* **FIRST RECORDING**

Price *Fantasia Nègre No. 3 in F Minor* **FIRST RECORDING**

Price *Snapshots: Lake Mirror, Moon Behind a Cloud, Flame* **FIRST RECORDING**

Price *Fantasia Nègre No. 4 in B Minor* **FIRST RECORDING: ORIGINAL VERSION**

Dr Samantha Ege piano

Dr Samantha Ege



Dr. Samantha Ege is the Lord Crewe Junior Research Fellow in Music at Lincoln College, University of Oxford. She holds a Ph.D. in Musicology from the University of York and a B.A. with honours in Music from the University of Bristol. She spent her second undergraduate year at McGill University as an exchange student. She taught music internationally for several years after graduating from Bristol. Her last appointment was at the United World College of South East Asia, Singapore. She joined Lincoln College in 2020.

Dr. Ege is a leading interpreter and scholar of the African American composer Florence B. Price. Dr. Ege's performances and publications shed an important light on composers from underrepresented backgrounds. She has brought her research and repertoire to the Chicago Symphony Center, Berklee College of Music, Esplanade (Singapore), University of Texas at Austin, University of Arkansas, University of York, Monash University, and the Women Composers Festival of Hartford.

Dr. Ege released her debut album in May 2018 with Wave Theory Records, called *Four Women: Music for solo piano by Florence Price, Vítězslava Kaprálová, Ethel Bilsland and Margaret Bonds*. The album featured the world premiere recording of Bilsland's *The Birthday Party*, which led to Dr. Ege preparing an edition of the suite, now published by

Faber Music. Her next release with Lorelt (Lontano Records Ltd.) focuses on Price's repertoire.

samanthaege.com

LORELT | Odaline de la Martinez | Lontano

The award-winning Cuban American composer-conductor **Odaline de la Martinez** co-founded **Lontano**, her chamber ensemble, in 1976 whilst studying composition at the Royal Academy of Music, and the ensemble's impact on the perception of new music has been profound and enduring. With Lontano she commissions, produces, performs and records with the primary aim of bringing to the fore the work of living contemporary composers, female composers from all periods, and Latin American classical music. The ensemble's sphere of activity includes contemporary opera, music theatre, concerts, workshops, education projects, tours, broadcasts and recordings.

Always at the front of music innovation, Lontano was one of the first ensembles to form its own record company when in 1992 it established the **LORELT** label (Lontano Records Ltd). Now with a catalogue of 44 recordings, LORELT features soloists as well as other ensembles and is noted for its archive of important and often neglected composers.

lorelt.co.uk

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