

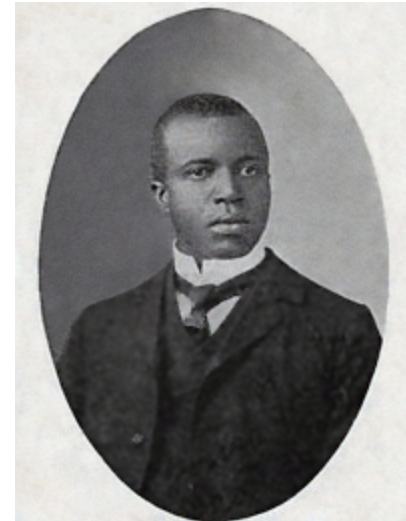
William Grant Still

Recognized as the “Dean of African American composers,” William Grant Still composed more than 150 compositions. He is credited with being the 1st African American to conduct a major symphony, the 1st African American to have his symphony performed by a leading orchestra, and the 1st African American to have an opera performed by a major opera company.



Scott Joplin

Before there was Jazz, there was Ragtime, and there was probably no Rag composer better than Scott Joplin. His compositions were known from coast to coast but unfortunately they became less popular as Ragtime gave way to Jazz. His best known composition was the theme song from the 1973 film “The Sting,” titled “The Entertainer.”



Alvin Ailey, Jr.

Hailed as the most important choreographer in modern dance, Alvin Ailey's performances have left a permanent imprint on American pop culture. The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is, to date, still one of the most recognized dance companies in the world.



Marian Anderson

Former Danbury, CT resident, Marian Anderson became the first person of color to perform with the Metropolitan Opera. In 1939 she was refused the opportunity to sing to an integrated audience (by the Daughters of the American Revolution). On Easter Sunday 1939 she delivered a soul-stirring performance at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to over 75,000 people.



Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes is the most recognized figure of the Harlem Renaissance. The following is one of his best known works titled *Harlem* and is sometimes called *A Dream Deferred*.

“Harlem” 1951

*What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?*

*Or crust and sugar over
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.*

Or does it explode?



Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou is arguably the most prolific autobiographer and poet of the 20th century. She has been a Pulitzer Prize nominee, a National Book Award Nominee, and a recipient of 3 Grammy Awards for the spoken word. In 1973 she won a Tony award for her play *Look Away*. At 80 she is still going strong.



Leontyne Price

Mississippi native, Mary Violet Leontyne Price became known worldwide by her performance as the lead in Verdi's *Aida*. She was the first African American to open a season at the Metropolitan Opera. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and The National Medal of Arts. She is the recipient of 19 Grammy Awards.



Phillis Wheatley

Phillis Wheatley was the first poet of African descent to publish a book. She was brought from Africa to Boston and bought as a slave, but had the unique opportunity to become educated (even to the point of studying Latin and Greek). In 1773, 39 of her poems were published in a volume titled Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral.



Romare Bearden

To date, Romare Bearden is recognized as "one of America's pre-eminent artists" and "the nation's foremost collagist." While he is known as a writer, cartoonist, and user of oil paints, he gained the most notoriety with his vividly colored collages.



Illustration 1: The Calabash (1970)

Suzan-Lori Parks

Suzan-Lori Parks distinguished herself as the first African American playwright to win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2002 with *Topdog/Underdog*. She also wrote the screenplay for the Spike Lee film *Girl 6* and co-wrote the screenplay *The Great Debaters*.

