

## CORRECTIONS OF FACTUAL ERRORS

### In the Interview of Celeste Headlee

April 18, 2007

William Grant Still's mother, Carrie Still, was not totally adverse to her son's pursuit of a musical career. She was a pianist herself and directed her own choral group. Carrie's father, a slaveowner, did not give her any property. He offered her a home and an orange grove if she would move near him. She declined.

Mr. Pace of the Black Swan received a letter from Varèse offering a scholarship for an Afro-American composer. He told his secretary to write to Varèse and inform him that no Colored composer of serious music existed in the United States. William Grant Still saw the letter and said, "Don't send that letter. I want that scholarship."

William Grant Still conducted the Hollywood Bowl symphony orchestra in 1936 (not the 1940s). Much later it was Calvin Simmons who was given credit for having been the first Negro to conduct a major symphony orchestra.

William Grant Still conducted only in the United States, not around the world.

Howard Hanson took *The Afro-American Symphony* to Germany when Hitler had just come to power in 1933 (not in the 1950s). The applause from the German audience forced Hanson to repeat the "Scherzo" twice, not just once.

The mounting of Still's opera, *Troubled Island*, was specifically and successfully promoted by Leopold Stokowski, not by Verna Arvey's articles. The New York City Center, inspired by Stokowski's urgings, elicited support from Eleanor Roosevelt and Fiorello LaGuardia. There were Black dancers and chorus members in the opera, appearing alongside Whites in blackface. The opera's three contractual performances occurred in March, April and May of 1949 (not all in the same week).

Still never wore a vest. And he did not compose music in a three-piece suit. His music paper was not pre-printed with the names of the parts; he either typed in the designations or stamped them on with a rubber stamp.

It was Howard Hanson, not Leopold Stokowski, who got Still a couple of jobs writing music for elementary school music textbooks.

Still never stopped writing symphonies, operas, or other works until January 1971, when he had his stroke. He always wrote for voice, voices, chorus and bands, throughout his career. He never confined himself to smaller pieces of music simply because his works were not being performed.

Still never felt, nor said, that his country had failed him. He believed that political entities tried to destroy him, but he never felt ostracized by the common people of all races.