



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



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Music is Love in Search of a Word

During February of each year, we celebrate Black History Month. We also celebrate the special holiday of Valentine's Day, when we honor the people we love. Some writers have characterized "music" as love in search of a word. Linking music with Black History month in this month's enewsletter, we feature African-American women in the music field - singer Ella Fitzgerald, composer Florence Beatrice Smith Price, and pianist Hazel Harrison.

Called "The First Lady of Jazz", **Ella Fitzgerald** was known for both the sweetness of her voice and her highly distinctive style of singing. She had a very difficult life as a child, but began to get attention after winning first prize at the amateur contest at Harlem's famed Apollo Theater in 1934. She began to enter - and win - every available talent contest she could find. She became famous in 1938, at the age of 21 after she recorded a playful version of the nursery rhyme, "A-Tisket, A-Tasket." The album sold 1 million copies, hit number one, and stayed on the pop charts for 17 weeks.

By the end of her career in the 1990s, Fitzgerald had recorded over 200 albums. Her final concert was in 1991, when she performed for the 26th time at New York's renowned Carnegie Hall. She received many honors including 13 Grammys, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the National Medal of the Arts, and she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

In 1933, **Florence Beatrice Smith Price** was the first black woman to have a symphony that she composed performed by a major American orchestra. An accomplished pianist, Price's first work was published when she was eleven years old. She attended the New England Conservatory and graduated as an organist and a piano teacher. In 1932, Price won four prizes, including the top prize for a symphonic composition in the widely revered Wanamaker Competition. The conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra presented her Symphony in E Minor for the Chicago World's Fair in 1933. The critics were unanimous in their raves. Price composed over three hundred works, and her songs and arrangements were performed by some of the most admired voices of her day, including famed black contralto Marian Anderson. Price's symphonies and chamber works were famous for incorporating the melodies of Negro spirituals; her work is considered an important part of the New Negro Arts Movement.



"The First Lady of Jazz", Ella Fitzgerald



Hazel Harrison

The premiere black pianist for almost four decades, **Hazel Harrison** began to study the piano at age four (1887). By age eight, she was supplementing the family income by playing for dancing parties. At one of those parties, she was heard by a German musician who became her teacher for many years. In October 1904, she appeared as a soloist with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. It was the first appearance with an orchestra in Europe of an American artist whose entire musical education had taken place solely in the U.S. The Berlin critics were unanimous in their praise: she was described as a "musical wonder", a "sensation", and a "virtuoso." Back in the U.S., she played many recitals, yet access to mainstream concerts in the U.S. were denied her because of her race. Throughout her career, Harrison taught, studied and performed. She served as the head of the piano faculty at Howard University and she established the Olive J. Harrison Piano Scholarship Fund there which is named for her mother.

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