



December 2019 Her Story ENewsletter Composers

Would you consider composing music to be a traditionally men's field? Surprisingly, over the centuries it has been very difficult for women to succeed in this male-dominated field. Not that women didn't have the ability or passion for this endeavor. This month we feature two dedicated women composers: Amy Marcy Cheney Beach and Florence Beatrice Smith Price.



Amy Marcy Cheney Beach

Music prodigy **Amy Marcy Cheney Beach** inherited her abilities from her singer and pianist mother. By age one, Beach had memorized forty songs; she was composing waltzes by age four. She learned the piano from her mother and had her first public recital when she was seven years old. At seventeen years old, she debuted with the Boston Symphony Orchestra playing Chopin's *Concerto in F Minor*.

After her marriage in 1885, Beach's husband requested she limit her public appearances, so she turned her attention to composing. The first American woman to receive recognition for her composition of large-scale works, Beach's *Mass in E-flat* was performed in 1892 by Boston's Handel and Haydn Society. In that same year, the Symphony Society of New York premiered her concert aria. This was the first time that orchestra had played a composition by a woman. After her husband's death, Beach achieved renown in Europe as both a performer and composer. Returning to the U.S. in 1914, Beach performed in the winters and composed in the summers. An advocate for women composers, she was a co-founder and served as the first president of the Society of American Women Composers.



Florence Beatrice Smith Price

Florence Beatrice Smith Price was also a music prodigy. She performed her first piano recital

at age four; her first composition was published when she was eleven. Valedictorian of her high school Price studied at the New England Conservatory beginning in 1904 where she double majored in organ and piano performance. After her graduation, she returned to Arkansas where she taught and began to concentrate on composing.

Segregation in Arkansas presented a myriad of problems for her and her family and they moved to Chicago in 1927. Here her career began to flourish with the publication by the G. Schirmer and McKinley publishing companies of her songs, piano music, and her instructional materials for piano. In 1932, her *Symphony in E minor* won first place in the Wanamaker Prize competition. Contralto Marian Anderson began regularly singing Price's arrangement of *My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord*. When the Chicago Symphony premiered her *Symphony No. 1 in E Minor* in 1933, Price became the first black female composer with a work played by a major orchestra. She continued to compose throughout the 1940s and early 1950s.

Amy Marcy Cheney Beach and Florence Beatrice Smith Price are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us all. Continue to help us tell women's stories! Tell young women especially that their dreams can become a reality in most any field of endeavor.

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen
Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America
www.herstoryatimeline.com
8547 E. Arapahoe Road, PMB J189
Greenwood Village, CO 80112-1430

STAY CONNECTED:

