

Classics for Kids



“Humor” Afro-American Symphony (Third Movement)

William Grant Still
Born: May 11, 1895
Died: December 3, 1978

William Grant Still was born in Woodville, Mississippi. He was the son of two school teachers. His father died when William was quite young, so he and his mother went to live with her mother in Little Rock, Arkansas.

William grew up listening to his grandmother tell stories about her life as a slave on a plantation in Georgia. He also grew up hearing her sing spirituals that she learned as a child. Later on, those stories and spirituals found their way into his music.

When William was nine, his mother remarried. His stepfather loved music, too. He bought a Victrola, an early phonograph, with which he introduced William to all kinds of music he'd never heard before, including opera. William took violin lessons when he was young, and then taught himself to play the cello, clarinet, oboe and French horn.

Still went to Wilberforce University in Ohio to study medicine, but didn't stay long. He began his music career in Columbus, Ohio. Then the great blues performer W.C. Handy invited him to come to Memphis to play with his band, and to do musical arrangements for it. That's when the blues started finding its way into Still's compositions.

William Grant Still's *Afro-American Symphony* was the first symphony by a black composer to be performed by a major orchestra. Still was also the first African-American to conduct a major American orchestra. But Still earned his living writing background music for radio and television shows like *Guns, Smoke, Perry Mason*, and *The Three Stooges*. In addition to symphonies, Still's classical compositions include chamber music, operas, and ballets.



William Grant Still



Listen Up!

Circle the instruments that you hear in William Grant Still's "Humor" movement 3.

 Grand Piano	 Bassoon	 French Horn	 Violin
 Cymbals	 Flute	 Trumpet	 Timpani

It's All Music!

There are many different styles of music. Just move your radio tuner around and you'll be surprised at all you find. Ask your parents, grandparents, neighbors, and friends what kind of music they like to listen to. List as many different styles of music as you can.



Hidden Message Puzzle

Unscramble each of the clue words. Copy the letters on the numbered lines to the other lines with the same number. All of the words are important words from William Grant Still's Biography.

LAIIMLW RAGTN SITLL

8 9 9 2 11 14 2 7 12 10 9

AOTIVLRC

3 9 13 10 14 2

ZAZJ

2

ESLUB

6 4 12

C.W. DHANY

13 1 2 7 16 15

SAISCLSC ROF DIKS

13 2 12 12 9 13 12 5 14 9 15 12



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 1 11 6 12 9 13 4 3 4 14 15 16 2 15

Here's your chance to create your own piece of art for a piece from "Humor."

Draw or write your own story as you listen to Classics for Kids. Send it to us and we'll post it at classicsforkids.com.

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