

WILLIAM GRANT STILL

Born: May 11, 1895

Died: December 3, 1978

William Grant Still was not only an African-American composer, he was a pioneer in American music. Still was educated at Wilberforce University, where he studied to be a doctor. But after a while, he made up his mind to become a musician.

Still was the first African-American to conduct a major American orchestra and his Afro-American Symphony was the first piece written by a black man to be played by an American orchestra. Because of this, Still got the nickname, "The Dean of African-American Composers." Since he was able to do these things, many other black composers were allowed to make their music heard as well.

Throughout his life, Still wrote lots of music for radio and TV shows. He also liked to use blues and jazz sounds in his music. One of his most famous works was an opera about the country Haiti called Troubled Island.