Week 10: Black Voices Matter

1. Had it not been for First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, this singer would not have sung in front of Lincoln Memorial in 1939. Who was the singer?
   A: Marian Anderson

   Marian Anderson, born on February 27, 1897 in Philadelphia, sang a broad range of classical music, from lieder, to opera, to spiritual. Anderson became an important figure in the struggle for black artists to overcome racial prejudice in the United States during the mid-twentieth century. In 1939, the Daughters of the American Revolution refused permission for Anderson to sing to an integrated audience in Constitution Hall in Washington, DC. The incident placed Anderson into the spotlight of the international community on a level unusual for a classical musician. With the aid of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and her husband Franklin D. Roosevelt, Anderson performed a critically acclaimed open-air concert on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1939, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in the capital. She sang before an integrated crowd of more than 75,000 people and a radio audience in the millions.

   Anderson continued to break barriers for black artists in the United States, becoming the first black person, American or otherwise, to perform at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City on January 7, 1955. Her performance as Ulrica in Giuseppe Verdi’s *Un ballo in maschera* was the only time she sang an opera role on stage.

   See her sing at the Lincoln Memorial:  
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAONYTMf2pk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAONYTMf2pk)

   Marian Anderson sings “Deep River” (Spiritual):  
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bytFrsL4_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bytFrsL4_4)

2. Camilla Williams became the first African-American singer to receive a regular contract from what major American opera company in 1946?
   A: New York City Opera

   Shortly after winning the Marian Anderson Fellowship, Camilla Williams (October 18, 1919 – January 29, 2012) became the first African-American singer to receive a regular contract with a major American opera company, the New York City Opera. In 1954, another first happened. She became the first African-American to sing a major role with the Vienna State Opera, performing the lead role of *Madama Butterfly*. 
Another worthy note is that she sang “The Star-Spangled Banner” at the White House right before Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech. Ms. Williams went on to influence generations of singers as a professor of voice at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.

Camilla Williams Tribute:
https://youtu.be/JHEM5-TPE0

_Porgy and Bess_ Lawrence Winters Cab Calloway Camilla Williams Gershwin live TV
https://youtu.be/RWWkCLgCN0Y

3. In 2005, Cincinnati Opera co-produced with Michigan Opera Theatre and Opera Company of Philadelphia this opera whose libretto is by Toni Morrison, and composed by Richard Danielpour. What is the opera?

   **A: Margaret Garner**

This opera is based on the true story of Margaret Garner who escaped from a plantation in Kentucky and fled free to Ohio. The story was the inspiration to Toni Morrison’s novel _Beloved_. It premiered in Detroit on May 2005 and then later here in Cincy in July 2005.

A rehearsal recording of the premiere performance:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4bz_Pv4PUw

A clip of the production at Opera Philadelphia:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4CmokrjY44

4. Usually playing opposite of Leontyne Price in _Porgy and Bess_, this American bass-baritone became known from his recital debut in New York’s Town Hall in 1950. Who is he?

   **A: William Warfield**

William Warfield was born in West Helena, Arkansas and grew up in Rochester, New York. He gave his New York recital on March 19, 1950. Soon after that, his career blossomed to be performing alongside Leontyne Price, whom he eventually married.

Fun fact is that Warfield was the only African American member of the "Ritchie Boys", thousands of soldiers who were trained at Fort Ritchie, Maryland. It was an intelligence center where hundreds of Jewish recruits who fled Nazi Germany for the United States were trained to interrogate their one-time countrymen. Warfield was brought to the camp because of his strong German skills which he perfected while studying music. Because of segregation, his skills were never put to use.
Warfield was a graduate of the Eastman School of Music. In 1975 he accepted an appointment as Professor of Music at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He later became Chairman of the Voice Department. In 1994, he moved to Northwestern University’s School of Music, where he stayed until his death.

“Bess, You is My Woman” from *Porgy and Bess*:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1jf9fVYrEA

5. **Robert McFerrin became the first African-American man to sing at the Metropolitan Opera in 1955. He also is the father of what Grammy Award-winning vocalist?**

   **A: Bobby McFerrin**

Robert McFerrin was born in Marianna, Arkansas and moved around to St. Louis, Chicago, and eventually to New York. He had success in roles both on opera and Broadway, with appearances with Tanglewood Music Festival, a Kurt Weill broadway, New York City Opera, and New England Opera Theater.

In 1953, McFerrin won the Metropolitan Opera’s “Auditions of the Air.” Becoming the first African-American to do so, however he did not received the contract that was a prize of that competition. Thanks to new leadership of the Met, he was the second African-American hired to sing on the Met stage, following Marian Anderson.

Robert McFerrin sings “Pari siamo” from Verdi’s *Rigoletto*:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9q_MjRRerk