The Black Composer: Identity, Invisibility, Relevance And The Making Of A Brand
In The Digital Age

D.M.A. Document

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Abstract

Art music composers of African descent have composed works for symphonies and chamber ensembles for more than a century. It is interesting to note that Black composers cannot be readily identified by many of the performers who would likely play their music. It seems that Black composers of art music are invisible beyond one or two well-known composers whose works are performed more often by traditional classical musical organizations. Even educated Black Americans demonstrate difficulty naming Black composers of art music. As a result, a crisis of identity has developed amongst Black composers who seem to be artists without a home for which a box has not been created to adequately explain their creations. Most Black composers of art music are as comfortable speaking in the musical language of Europe as they are speaking in the vernacular languages of blues, gospel, jazz, r&b, and hip-hop. This document uses the words of Black composers as captured in two primary texts and in an inventory of questions developed by the write to explore the notion of an identity crisis among Black composers of art music, and considers the contributing factors and reasons behind this crisis. The document will also explore how community engagement and the use of technology may provide possible solutions that will assist in raising the level of relevance and visibility of Black composers within the Black community and across the vast American cultural landscape. Finally, the document concludes by suggesting that developing ‘ethnic blackness’ as a brand might allow composers to more effectively interact with the listener, create support for their works and, in turn, develop a degree of relevance and financial stability that will allow Black composers to operate within an artistic infrastructure that presents, promotes, and preserves their work.
This document is dedicated to my family and friends who have all suggested, after listening to me talk about Black composers, that I do something about it. This is a start!
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Fields of Study

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Minor Field: Theory & Composition
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Prelude: Introduction

Composers of African descent\(^1\) have been working within the Western European art music tradition for over 200 years, yet, as I introduce myself and identify my vocation as that of a composer, I invariably come across the question… “What is a Black composer?”… from the educated, and not so educated alike. The frequency of the question itself, and the confused looks I get from the many different ways I have come to answer it, has forced me to think much more deeply about exactly what it is I do, and why I do it. By the same token, it begs the question, why are African descendant composers in America who focus on Western European art music not as well known as American composers of art music from other ethnic backgrounds? Where are the Black John Williams’ or Steve Reichs’? The Black Jennifer Higdons’ and Maria Schneiders’? That we exist but seem to have little to no impact on African American culture and even less an impression on American culture at-large is, in a word, troubling.

To be sure, the issue of Black American artistic invisibility is not new. The quest for identity, respect, visibility, and relevance began as the first Africans arrived in the New World, and continues today. Black music-making and thoughts about Black music were documented in the 19th and early 20th century where composers such as James Reese Europe (1881-1919) and Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943) were composing, lecturing,

\(^{1}\) The terms “African American,” “Black,” “of African descent,” “African descendant” will all be used interchangeably in reference to Black composers.
and publishing their thoughts on creating a music unique to the Negro. Europe, born in Mobile, Alabama to a musical family, was a nationalist that affirmed, in protest and practice, the importance of black music and musicians on black cultural/aesthetic grounds. Writing in the 1914 *Evening Post* he says:

> You see, we colored people have our own music that is a part of us. It’s the product of our souls; it’s been created by the sufferings and miseries of our race… some would doubtless laugh heartily at the way our Negro symphony is organized… The result of course is that we have developed a kind of symphony music that… is different and distinctive, and that lends itself to the playing of the peculiar compositions of our race.²

Europe understood that the music of the ‘colored people’ existed for colored people, and that people outside that context may not understand the relevance encoded in the sounds they heard, or what they saw on stage. We will return to the idea of direct cultural relevance in our discussion about composers as community activists. Dett offers another perspective.

Nathaniel Dett was born in Drumsville, Ontario and trained in the academy. Upon graduation from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, he became the first black composer to earn a bachelor’s degree in composition in the United States. His argument reflects his immersion in formal Western European musical training in the sense that he sees much potential in the “folk materials, the melodies of an enslaved people, who poured out their longings, their beliefs, and their aspirations in the one great universal language” (*Musical America* 1916). He continues,

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Dett’s assertion that the “Negro themes” are worthy to be presented in forms associated with the high art of the concert hall may, on the surface, sound quite opposite Europe’s claim that colored music is for and by colored people, but they are the same side of the same coin. Both men are basing their statements on the belief that the music of Africa's descendants in America deserved to be used as the foundation of an art music and heard by whatever means in which the ‘musical architects’ choose to deliver it.

William C. Banfield writes that Dett and Europe’s perspectives “show that black artists and composers were very much involved and concerned with the shaping of American concert music at the beginning of the twentieth century” (Banfield 2003). The questions at stake here are “what happened to that voice?” Where did it go? How do we get it back? We turn again to Banfield’s text Musical Landscapes in Color. He writes:

A shortage of documentation and sustained critical inquiry regarding black American music and perspectives now impairs historical and contemporary accounts of American musical culture. It is difficult to locate information pertaining to the contributions of African American composers, and it is harder still to find a body of collected writings expressing the ideas of black composers themselves.4

Not only is it difficult to “locate information pertaining to the contributions of African American composers,” anecdotal evidence culled from conversations with established

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3 Ibid., 17-18.
4 Ibid., x.
African American scholars suggests that work in the area is not, or at least, was not fruitful when trying to establish themselves as scholars.\(^5\)

In the *Journal of Black Studies* article “Black Artistic Invisibility: A Black Composer Talking ‘Bout Taking Care of the Souls of Black Folk While Losing Much Ground Fast,” Banfield defines the lack of scholarship on Black composers in the context of the larger American cultural view of Black life:

If we examine the state of scholarship about African American culture in traditional music disciplines, we find that too often the academy consistently obscures the beauty, complexity, and variety of Black life and artistic expression… I like to think of this as the cultural politics of misrepresentation. I am concerned as well with a definition of Black musical value and our generational divides on this issue.\(^6\)

His statement highlights the academy’s reflection of the social dysfunction present in American society, as well as the disagreement within the black community itself on how to value and define our musical output. Where Dett and Europe seemed to be approaching the same answer from different angles on the question of the value of Black art music, contemporary Black America is somewhat divided. This is an important issue for the scholars of today to address, though many have become part of the problem “[m]ostly because we [the scholars] don’t speak out and educate.”\(^7\)

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\(^5\) This comes from many conversations with established scholars about the study of Black Americans in a wide range of areas from liberation theology to music. Most notable are those with my father, theologian Dr. Mark Lomax, Sr., and with attendees at a recent gathering of Black composers in Boston, April 2013.


\(^7\) Ibid., 198.
A quick scan of the televised music awards shows reveals that popular culture has defined a musical artist as someone who is visually pleasing, follows directions, generally lacks a world view counter to that of the status quo, and has little or no musical training. While these entertainers definitely have their place, so too, do our country’s creative minds, of every ethnic background, who have honed their craft towards a unique and individualized expression that challenges our notions of art and beauty, life and liberty, the spirit and the essence of humanity. While one can reasonably argue that the whole of American culture is in a state of crisis, images and representation of Black artistry are not even two-dimensional.

Mainstream American media has dismissed important creative cultural/social/spiritual aspects of Black artistic expressive culture, and following that lead are the educational, cultural institutions that arm our society with relevant and lasting impressions of what is valued and what is preserved. This de-evaluation leads to not only the suffocation of major portions of Black culture, but as a counterproductive ploy, investments are made into the commodification of negative cultural imagery and overblown pop teen “celebridom.”

The ‘major portions of Black culture’ which are being ‘suffocated’ include valuable musical expressions in jazz, blues, and concert music, as well as all of the other artistic disciplines. For the purposes of this document, my intent is to focus on increasing the relevance and visibility of Black composers who work within the realm of Western

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8 Ibid., 196-197.
European concert music. I will use the words of the composers themselves to discuss several issues concerning why they seem to be invisible in both African American culture and the larger American cultural scene, and offer a strategy that may help bring their work and their perspective out of the shadows.

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9 This discussion will rely heavily on two texts in particular. *The Black Composer Speaks* edited by David Baker, Lida Belt, and Herman Hudson is the 1978 publication (Scarecrow Press, Inc) of survey responses by fifteen Black composers to questions ranging from ‘what is black music’ to issues of craft (thoughts on genre, use of improvisation, instrumentation etc.). The second text is *Musical Landscapes in Color* which is, in effect, a follow-up to *The Black Composer Speaks* published in 2003 and covers similar material in a more conversational manner. The responses of the composers in these texts will be used in dialogue with the responses from the Lomax Survey Inventory On Issues Related To The Black Composer developed for this document. Dr. Michael Woods, who is a respondent to my survey, is also represented in the Banfield text but that conversation was not deemed relevant to this discussion. Composers T.J. Anderson and Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson are represented in both texts and some comments have been included to show the evolution of their position on the topics of defining Black art music and the role of education in helping to promote Black art music.
Exposition: Presentation of Themes

In April of 2013, I attended a conference of Black composers that had the feeling of, and in fact was described as, a historic event. Three generations of Black composers attended this meeting. I was the youngest composer at age 34, and the oldest composer present was approaching 80! The conference was hosted in Boston by Dr. William C. Banfield\textsuperscript{10} and Dr. Emmett Price, III\textsuperscript{11} with the intent to convene as many African American composers of concert music who were active in various academic institutions. The purpose was to “provide collegial support, advise, bring visibility and institutional partnering to the programming, public exposure, understanding, study and performance of new music creation.”\textsuperscript{12} The gathering was intense and joyful as all present were excited about coming together to address issues that affect all composers but especially, in the view of the group, composers of African descent. Early in the discussions and reflections of the composers, it was clear that they were concerned about weighty issues relating to the state of the Black composer. There was a sense that these very educated, highly respected artists and scholars were tired of continually bumping against the proverbial glass ceiling, and were finally working to take control of how, when, and by

\textsuperscript{10} In addition to being an author and scholar, Banfield has composed 11 symphonies, is an accomplished jazz guitarist, and is professor of Africana Studies at Berklee School of Music in Boston, MA.

\textsuperscript{11} Dr. Price is a professor of African American Studies at the New England Conservatory of music. He is a noted ethnomusicologist, theologian, and composer of sacred music.

\textsuperscript{12} Personal notes on the development of a mission statement from the proceedings. April 27, 2013
whom their work would be performed. Topics of discussion covered a wide range that included: the state of the Black composer; identifying and mentoring young composers; developing a viable infrastructure for the performance, recording, and study of our work; and expanding our audience, among other items.

At the conference I took advantage of my youth to ask questions that were being continuously talked around. Given that Black composers, scholars of Black music, performers and many others have gathered in the past with a similar purpose\textsuperscript{13}, what would make this group different? Did we know why the other groups such as the Society of Black Composers (1968–c.1977) failed? How was it that we have come to have more African Americans in coveted academic positions acting as deans, area heads and department chairs, and endowed scholars than ever in our post-slavery history, yet still have relatively few notable performances and recordings? What could we do as a group to enhance efforts and increase both the visibility and relevance of the musical product, AND that of the composers themselves? This line of questioning led to a heated discussion about who we are as composers, what it is that we do, or think we do, relevance, and different ways we can go about changing our situation.

\textsuperscript{13} One such occasion was documented in the book \textit{Black Music In Our Culture} (ed. By Dominique-Renè De Lerma and published in 1970 by Kent State University Press). This meeting was designed to provide tools with which to study and teach on Black music and outline issues with the performance and publication of music by Black composers of art music. William Grant Stills’ presentation is striking as he states that from his first violin lesson he wanted to be a composer but had to start his career as a musician and arranger for W.C. Handy “[a]fter I left college, economic and racial factors did indeed influence my way of life… I was determined to make a living in music, and the popular field was the only commercial field open to me and others like me… it later balanced my conservatory training to give more facets to my musical personality.”
Similar issues confronting the performance and publishing of Black composers raised at the Boston conference have been documented in *The Black Composer Speaks* and *Musical Landscapes In Color*. While there are also several articles that outline the issues confronting Black composers, the Baker and Banfield works have given the most prominent attention to these matters. My research did not, however, reveal any text, journal article, or website/blog that was able to put these issues into a context that allowed for a discussion of possible solutions. I believe that this is, in part, because those of us who work in the American creative world have all grown up in an environment where “art” is financed by arts organizations and societies, and promoted in ever-shrinking circles that have almost always excluded many of the active American composers of African descent. Composer Thomas Jefferson (T.J.) Anderson has stated that:

> The black artist, like the black community, is colonized. I am personally convinced that the availability of records, performances, commissions, and publishers has little to do with musical worth. My friend M. B. Tolson used to refer to this contradiction as “the artistry of circumstance.” If you happen to be in the right place at the right time, something may develop. The “right times” are always dictated by forces beyond any single individual’s control.\(^\text{14}\)

Prevailing wisdom suggests that “your gifts will make room for you.”\(^\text{15}\) One is simply to create excellent work and the commissions would come. I have seen this happen for many of my composer friends of Euro-American persuasion and it has, in every case,

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\(^\text{15}\) Proverbs 18:16
made sense. Many of these persons have developed a network, a community of persons that support their work, but as Undine Smith Moore (1904-1989) illustrates, this is often not the case in the experience of Black composers:

> I had no early contact with anyone who knew how to go about getting anything published. Worse still, I would, by my position as a black child, have automatically assumed that this was not intended for me even if I had heard it discussed… I cannot logically blame the publishers for not publishing works which were never submitted, but I can blame a society which educated me to feel my “otherness,” that left me ignorant of that which was accessible to those of the dominant group with similar talent.\(^{16}\)

Smith Moore and Anderson suggest to us that access to performance opportunities and publishing, and other factors that make for a successful career as a composer, are about access and knowledge of the possibilities. It would be wonderful if these statements from 1978 rang untrue today, but my own experiences, and that of several of my colleagues, echo their words. Black composers have a crisis of perception as there is a lack of presence in the minds of both the arts community, and in the communities in which we live, as to our cultural and commercial value as creators.

Composer and professor of Jazz performance at Hamilton College, Michael Woods takes that line in our survey question about the barriers to success for Black composers:

> I feel that the largest barrier is more conceptual than actual. The average American has a stereotypical view of people of color. Most white people, and even many black people, have an easy time thinking of a black person as an athlete or as an entertainer. For many people when you say virtuoso violinist or symphony conductor or classical composer they do not often see an image of a black person. Many people of Euro-American background feel uncomfortable around people of color who have accomplished things that show them to be their equal. Sometimes the feelings are very deep and that person has never even voiced their

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\(^{16}\) Baker et al., *Composer Speaks*, 180.
discomfort or even given any pre-thought to it, but it is still there. Everything in our society that has allowed blacks to be treated as underlings falls apart when we accomplish things that show what an outstanding intellect we indeed do possess. Properly depicting that intellect as well as marketing it has never been an issue that has been looked at in any depth. It is almost always left to chance, which never comes close to the degree of P.R. [public relations], that people of color need to be presented properly to the American public.¹⁷

Thus the crisis of perception is coupled with the politics of misrepresentation. We see successful athletes plastered on the sides of buildings and cereal boxes. Movie stars and entertainers are abundant, but rarely do we see Black artists, the writers, painters, sculptors and composers on television and magazines. While this is true of all ethnic groups in our melting pot, the issue that makes this even more poignant for composers of African descent is that images of African American success are not balanced beyond the basketball courts, football fields and movie screens. We know Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, and Bill Gates. We regularly see business owners and finance industry executives of European, Asian, and other non-black ethnic groups on television and in magazines. These images are wonderful. They help us to show our children what is possible, but that message is always stronger when the image on the television or magazine resembles what that child sees in the mirror every morning.

Dr. Woods points out that most people, Black or Euro-American, “have an easy time thinking of a Black person as an athlete or entertainer” but “do not often see an image of a black person” when they think about a conductor of the symphony or a composer or virtuoso performer of classical repertoire. This is another cog in the

¹⁷ Mark A. Lomax, Lomax Survey Inventory On Issues Related To The Black Composer (2013), question 3.
perception crisis that Black composers face. While composing my ballet ‘The Butterfly Princess’ for symphony orchestra, I visited my grandmother and played a portion of it for her. She stops the music midway through the sample and asks me in a whisper, as if others were listening, “This is great baby, but isn’t that what white people do?” My grandmother and I have been at odds with my musical output for going on twenty years, but if she and the rest of my family have a hard time seeing me as a successful composer, outside of genres generally accepted as “black,” what hope do I have of convincing the world?

Dr. Woods also touches on another, possibly more sensitive subject: the perceived level of discomfort that America has with the creative intellectual accomplishments of Black Americans. There is the prevailing notion in Afrocentric thought that the American status quo, even as it touts diversity, is built upon the racial framework of Black inferiority. It is believed that if Booker T. Washington’s ideal of an American meritocracy had come to fruition then Blacks would no longer have to teach their children that they have to be “twice as good to get just as much,” but that does not seem to be the case. Clearly, this points to a systemic issue. The Founding Fathers created a society fundamentally based on inequity while preaching equality for all. This system was based on patterns that developed in Europe giving rise to the transatlantic slave trade. Dr. Linda James Meyers reasons that “a society that perpetuates racism and sexism to the point of institutionalization is teaching its adherents to think in a very limited, superficial
manner... The logical outcome of such a system has to be fear, insecurity, anxiety, in
every social institution.”18 Thus, that “conceptual barrier” Dr. Woods speaks of may very
well be a result of a system that teaches limited thinking and insecurity, though not on a
conscious level. The ingenuity of Black creative people that flies in the face of that
system is also a part of the crisis of perception which plays into the politics of
misrepresentation. It would seem that Black composers need a box that allows them to fit
neatly into the American consciousness. I hope that the forthcoming suggestions will help
to build an acceptable box, on the composers’ terms.

The issue of identity is an important part of the discussion between the composers
themselves. What started as the Black Composers Collective quickly became the
Composers of Color Collective (CCC) as the majority of seasoned and established
composers voiced opinions that the word “Black” was, itself problematic. Dr. William
Menefield also sees the concept of the “Black” composer as a barrier to success for
composers of African descent. He writes:

Black composers are never just composers. They are always Black
composers. I wish I could say that it was just about race, but I have
found in my experience that it is meant as an insult; a way of
keeping Black composers in their place, so to speak. I believe a lot
of it has to do with the music. Works by Black art music
composers are often heavily influenced by other genres of Black
music: R & B, Jazz, Gospel, etc. Because these genres of music
are often viewed as less than high art, the art music of Black
composers is as well.19

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19 Lomax, *Survey*, question number 3.
His sentiments echo those of noted composer Hale Smith (1925-2009) who was fond of saying that the works of black composers should be studied and performed along side those of European and Euro-American composers leaving the audience to realize the ethnicity of the composer when he (or she) stands to be recognized for the work itself.\(^\text{20}\) T.J. Anderson agrees in his response to our *Composers of Color* resolution:

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\ldots\text{CCC is the sound of the future, inclusion. We had to be Black (1969) because that was all we had... We never joined any club, or school of thought, we always went our own way; (William Grant) Still, Ulysses Kaye, Hale (Smith)... Our reality now has less to do with the rejection of race, but it has to do with ideas... We rarely get to pick our own leadership. You want people who will “stand up” and represent to the voice of the composers. WE have to be globally connected, you have to go for a bigger mix.}\(^\text{21}\)
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At best, the community of composers of African descent are split on the issue. Menefield, Anderson, Smith, and many others believe that being labeled as a Black composer is a hinderance to the success of Black composers. On the one hand, from a political and marketing perspective, within the U.S. borders the term “Black” is limiting given its historic connotation. Diluting its “Americanness,” towards an expanded perception implied in the “of Color” part of the title, gives the composer a connection to the majority of the world. On the other hand, proponents of the moniker believe that employing the word “Black,” as a means of describing both the composer and his/her output, specifies that which makes the contribution unique while maintaining its connection with the larger “colored” population of the world. Economist, author, and founder of the Harvest


\(^{21}\) This quote is from an email thread related to the Composers of Color Collective conference received on May 28th, 2013.
Institute Dr. Claude Anderson\textsuperscript{22} suggests, in a lecture on the use of cooperative economics in the Black community, that the further away we move from Blackness, the less we are connected to that which gives us strength; the experience of those who were brought to these shores as Africans, surviving three long months of complete hell in the belly of the ships, and 400 years of shared social status with horses and, at best second-class citizenship. To be Black is to be connected to a history of beauty and genius in the face of unparalleled inhumanity. Is that something to be set aside in favor of the “bigger mix?” If so, then what is Black art music, the term that has been used in many circles to differentiate jazz and concert music from more popular forms?

Most would agree that the basic definition of Black art music is, as T.J. Anderson states “[a]ny composition written by a black composer.”\textsuperscript{23} Beyond that basic definition, notions of art music by Black composers get more varied and diverse. I will list several chronologically, from 1978 in \textit{The Black Composer Speaks} to \textit{Musical Landscapes in Color} (1993)\textsuperscript{24} and the responses from the Lomax Survey questions\textsuperscript{25} (2013):

1978:

Undine Smith Moore:
I use the term black music to describe music created mainly by people who call themselves black, and whose compositions in their large or

\textsuperscript{22}Anderson, Claude, “The Power of Blackness: Recapturing the Gifts of God,” Lecture on Blackness and cooperative economics, Web, \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7i4_EiReFE}


\textsuperscript{25}Mark Lomax, \textit{Lomax Survey Inventory On Issues Related To The Black Composer}
complete body show a frequent, if not preponderant, use of significant elements derived from the Afro-American heritage.  

Coleridge Taylor-Perkinson:
...I cannot define black music. I could say that it is a music that has its genesis in the black psyche or the black social life, but it is very difficult to say what black music really is. There are kinds of black music, just as there are other kinds of music. I could say that black music is a music that comes out of the black lifestyle and how it’s lived, regardless of geographical location. It is, however, very difficult to pin down. There are some things that are clearly recognizable as black music and there are other things in which the differences are less obvious. It’s difficult to say who is imitating whom once we get past a certain point… The only definition I can come up with is to say that it’s music written by black composers. The thing that I consider unique about my own music is the inspirational understanding of blackness.

1993:
T.J. Anderson:
I am ready to move off of the question about black music… There was a time when we were insular, when we were basically segregated. Black composers reinforced each other because of the need to survive, and of course, we were closer to the culture. Now, the second half of my life has been almost totally integrated. The question doesn’t have the sense of urgency it once had. I think for some people it does have a sense of meaning, but for me it doesn’t… I think in many ways as we move onward in the twenty-first century, the question of what a black composer is becomes almost obsolete. The questions now become what an american composer is, and how internationalism affects being an American composer. That is where we are headed.

2013:
Michael Woods:
Black art music is music composed, performed, or conducted by black performers who have made making an artistic statement a direct goal of their presentation. I see art music as being different from popular music in its target audience, message and general appeal.

William Menefield:
I do not have a definition for Black Art Music. I’ve never thought of Art Music and Black Art Music as two separate entities. I’ve always thought that Art Music is Art Music regardless of the race or nationality of the composer.

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26 Baker et al., Composer Speaks, 177.
27 Ibid., 244-245.
28 Banfield, Landscapes, 32-33.
29 Lomax, Survey, question 1.
30 Ibid., question 1.
Cedric Adderley:
I define Black Art Music as music composed by artists of Afro-American descent that is composed for soloists and/or ensembles that have traditionally performed music in the western classical styles. Considering the evolution of these styles, my definition is broad and inclusive of many styles that reflect music of the generally accepted historical time periods associated with the study of music history.31

It would seem that the crisis of perception could be traced back to the issues of identity facing composers of African descent and the rest of Black America, as it is very hard to define something that is in constant flux. The terms “Composers of Color,” “Black,” “American,” “Black American,” “African American,” and their many variations have all been used to describe the creators. Observed in the context of brand creation, you would be hard pressed to find a successful company with similar identity issues. These issues extend to notions of exactly what is art music as produced by Black composers.

When asked about distinctions between jazz, a music that has long been considered “Black classical music” and music composed in the Western European art aesthetic in the survey, respondents aptly reflected the wide differences that exists amongst composers of African descent.

Cedric Adderley:
I generally make a clear distinction between art music and non-art music such as jazz, gospel, rhythm & blues, and rock. This is for the purpose of categorizing the intended performing ensembles rather than describing the creative elements. As we moved through the 20th century and into the 21st, many of the elements of improvisation, colorful chord structures and progressions as well as standard musical forms have crossed the boundaries of traditionally-accepted styles and categories; however, the ensembles have remained relatively consistent with little variation in instrumentation.32

William Menefield:
I do, however, make a distinction between art music and non-art music, but

31 Ibid., question 1.
32 Ibid., question 1.
only in nomenclature; not in rank. In general, I have found that art music scholars organized genres of music into a hierarchy with art music at the pinnacle and every other genre below it, as if art music is more sophisticated than other genres. I believe that every genre can be of high artistic value and should be evaluated solely on quality and not some unwritten hierarchical order.  

Michael Woods:
For me there is no distinction between jazz and classical music at the professional level. Both types of music are extremely challenging and call for equal amounts of skill, preparation and stylistic emersion... There have been many ways in which popular, jazz and classical treatments have overlapped. I welcome those blends and would be inclined to be quite excepting of all manner of mixtures as long as the overall quality of presentation remains high.  

Thus, the inability to sufficiently define the product, and its creator, severely limits the ability of any willing party to adequately market the art music of Black Americans to anyone, let alone Blacks, when artist and product lack a secure identity. In many ways, this is as much attributable to the social conditions in which Black Americans live, as to what seems to be an intrinsic inability to define oneself in contemporary culture where Black Americans have much more freedom to do so, than half a century ago given the strides of the civil rights movement. 

The Duboisian analysis of the Black psyche was never more real to me as I came to realize, in Boston, that to be a Black composer is to embody the expression of multiple identities in a singular consciousness. It is clear that relevance as a Black composer will come, in part from a new level of focus on our own identity. Once we decide who we are, our function socially, and culturally will be more clearly defined which will, in turn, help us make the case that we provide something unique and necessary to Black America

33 Ibid., question 1.
34 Ibid., question 1.
specifically, and to America at large. American composers of African descent must come
to see their Blackness as an asset, as a composite of three vast cultures (African,
European, American) harmonized in a single consciousness leading to the creation of an
idiosyncratic cultural product. This concept of function comes up quite often in my
conversations with other Black composers.

Function in the music of Black Americans is what is commonly referred to as an
African retention\textsuperscript{35}. An ideal that has survived in the collective Black consciousness and
connects Black American culture with some aspect of West African culture. Music has
always served Black society in some way. It accompanies every aspect of life from
celebration to mourning, birth to death. Black life, indeed, African life, has a soundtrack.
As Black composers have wrestled with how to present themselves, there have been
many perspectives on their function. As the following quotes show, notions of function
differ widely amongst Black composers.

T.J. Anderson:
The role of the black artist, like that of any artist, is to expand the dimensions
within the human experience, build new ways of communication, and express a
sense of fidelity to his or her own personal traditions.\textsuperscript{36}

Undine Smith Moore:
The primary function of any artist in any period is to convey as honestly and
sincerely as he can his personal vision of life.\textsuperscript{37}

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson:
I think the main purpose, especially for the black artist, is to be excellent…
In contemporary society, more so than at any other time, we have to understand


\textsuperscript{36} Baker et al., \textit{Composer Speaks}, 2.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 180.
that everything we’re doing is going to change the total picture in one way or another. There is a sphere of influence that one has. We don’t all have to get on a political platform, but we definitely have to have a point of view. I think that if an artist is functioning without a point of view, there’s no reason for him being there.\textsuperscript{38}

It is tough to figure out the role of the artist. At one point I thought I knew the answer, but what I found out is that I don’t know the answer. I thought that there was an obligation that one had as an artist. I didn’t try to verbalize it. The first time the question was asked of me directly was by Dean Dixon… That was the first time I thought about what a conductor has to do [in the community]. … I didn’t see the artist as the social being I know he or she is now…Like the artist whose job it is to create this art form and disperse it, the minister’s job is to walk into church every Sunday and lead his flock. He has a social responsibility to make them aware of certain things in their lives that they may be too naive to handle. The artist has that multiplicity of roles, and I can’t enumerate them. Hopefully the artist has some kind of morality and conscience, and that he never gives that up just to be successful.\textsuperscript{39}

Julius Williams:
There is a lot of discouragement out there, and I would like for black composers, conductors, and artists to be more visible. I think my role is to educate and to show that we are here and should be taken seriously, and that this is part of our heritage. Too often black composers are grouped, or considered an adjunct or afterthought… The point should be that we want to incorporate [black composers and conductors] in order to make a better musical world… My role is, I hope, to educate and to create an easier path for younger musicians, so that it’s not such a stretch to have an African American composer get a Pulitzer.\textsuperscript{40}

Stephen Michael Newby:
The composer’s role in society, as we move into the twenty-first century, is to re-create. The composer is a storyteller. The composer either reminds us of the past, explains what is going on in the present, or warns us of the future. I believe the role of art, if you look at its history, has always been to express where humankind has been. The cannon is expanding. It is necessary for us to take on greater roles in order to realize fully our realities and our potentials as human beings.\textsuperscript{41}

Michael Woods:
Black composers provide a unique voice because no one can tell your story for you. You must tell it. Whatever amount and type of experience and training you can get you must amass those skills and make your statement. Even if a white composer has been writing longer and has a more extensive grip on the color palette that a symphony orchestra generally employs, he cannot make the statement for Black America.

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\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 247.
\textsuperscript{39} Banfield, \textit{Landscapes}, 244-245.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 270-271.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 186.
\end{flushleft}
Black composers contribute to the cultural validity of African American intellect in a way that is vital to any fair treatment of people of color. Black writers must see to it that there are other items on the menu of the depiction of life through black eyes than rap, rock, and R&B and Gospel. Those styles are fine and I am delighted that we have so many starts in those areas. However we must have that talented tenth that Dubois spoke of. All black composers do not have to write string quartets in an artificial display of complex contrapuntal scoring to prove a point, but there must be representation on all or at least as many levels as possible.érodril

Cedric Adderley:
I view the role of Black composers much in the same way that I view any other creative artist. Our primary function is to create great work that will be studied, performed, and enjoyed by a wide range of people in perpetuity. Our historical records are just beginning to document the story of the Black composers who created music equal in quality of that of the finest composers of European descent. As a result, even within our own community, we do not fully recognize or appreciate that we are a diverse community of scholars and artists with expertise equal to that of our counterparts of other races in composing music in all genres.

Having been born and raised in the Black community as well as having spent the majority of my career as a music educator in the Black community, I choose to play a role in shaping the cultural landscape of the Black community, the nation, and internationally to be inclusive of the work of Black composers. Although we should not be the primary force within the musical community promoting and ensuring that we assume our rightful place in the landscape of American culture and within Black American culture, Black composers must take the lead in both proving our existence and level of excellence in our craft.

In many ways, function can be equated with relevance as it is often ones function that makes the connection to ones community most evident. It would seem that consensus can be drawn from the above quotes around the Black composers chief function being that of a communicator, in the widest sense of the word. The act of communicating is an engagement in an exchange of ideas. As Dr. Woods suggests, “no one can tell your story for you.” In this case, these ideas or stories, revolve around a particular cultural experience that has long been ignored in many places where the experiences of others have been celebrated. Communication for the Black composer is as much the same as it is

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43 Ibid., question 2.
different from composers from other ethnic groups. As a Black composer, one must simultaneously educate and entertain, uplift and edify. With each piece the composer of African descent is responsible for articulating a cultural expression, ideals that may be unique or not, and in ‘representing the race’ one must always strive towards excellence while “tagging” history with a colorful “We Were Here” on the walls of America’s concert halls. While it may be safe to assume that all composers strive towards excellence in their work, many do not deem it necessary to carry the weight of their entire culture on their artistic backs. They do not have to, as the history has been written in their favor. The lack of a sound presence in that history, the lack of visibility which Dr. Williams suggests is, itself, a key role for Black composers and, in his case conductors, of art music gives the sense that there is an extra layer of expectation. This is reified every time I present a piece to an ensemble and am asked whether or not it has elements of jazz or gospel and seeing the enthusiasm recede depending on what their expectation was. This is often a point of confusion for the young composer of African descent as the use of such vernacular forms and phrasing is often frowned upon by the academy, but expected by performers. I have found it a rare occasion when my work has been accepted on its own merits as an artistic contribution rather than an appropriation of a particular musical language. The lack of a well-documented presence in America’s concert music history has been a disservice to the composers, performers, and the audience. I want to now explore a

44 The word “tag” is commonly used as a reference to the use of graffiti or urban art on the sides of public buildings during the 1980s and 1990s. It is currently used in reference to the illegal spray painting of gang names on public and private property
few of the reasons that Black composers have found themselves culturally disconnected, and present a few possible ways to alleviate the issue by bringing the composers and their music to a place where it is relevant, visible, and a viable brand in Black culture and the wider American cultural landscape.
We have spoken much in the preceding pages about what Black composers think about the challenges that exist to getting performances, publications, and generally being more visible on the American arts scene. While those are all valid, I want to highlight several areas in particular that I believe significantly impact the composer generally, and the Black composer disproportionately. The first is a generality: the decline of arts education in the public schools has had a major impact on the appreciation of acoustic music, especially music that exceeds three minutes in duration. Secondly, the absence of the composers from the physical concert space and virtual space is, in many respects, a self-inflicted wound. Lastly, we will discuss the relative lack of availability and accessibility with the music itself and the seeming unwillingness of composers of art music to produce their own recordings. After digging through these issues, I will suggest a few possible solutions in each area: education, physical and virtual visibility, and countering the sense that art music should not be accessible to ‘the people.’

The Issues

I have often considered myself one of the lucky ones having grown up around musicians, began my career in music at the age of twelve, and received my first commission at eighteen. I knew that Black people wrote all sorts of music but I was in

45 Many composers have a presence on the internet through websites, but the relatively few performances of living composers means that there are very few names in the concert-going public consciousness to search rendering the rest virtually invisible.
my late twenties before I could name a Black composer whose output was centered around concert music. I have no recollection of hearing any of their names in primary or secondary grades. They were not even a part of the curriculum at the very liberal performing arts high school I attended, and, with the exception of a few significant jazz composers, the contributions of Black composers of concert music were never once discussed in any music class I attended. The old Buddhist proverb “when the student is ready, the teacher will appear” proved true in my case as my mother started connecting the dots the more I showed her my work and compositions. It was she who put me in touch with her old friend Dr. William Banfield, and it was he who first sent me the two foundational texts for this document. From those initial conversations I began an exploration into a world that had been invisible to me, an African American musician studying Western European compositional traditions and techniques. Upon hearing the music and reading the scores of Hale Smith, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, William Grant Still, Undine Smith Moore, Tania Leon, Jeffrey Mumford, Anthony Davis, Regina Harris Baiocchi, George Walker, and the many others Bill featured in his *Landscapes* text, I suddenly felt as though the musical language I was hearing in my head and working to bring about on the page was not so foreign. I have always loved the music of the great European composers, especially Ravel, Debussy, Bartók and Stravinsky, and have a great deal of respect for the Americans (Copland, Carter, Piston, and Ives!), but

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46 Jeffrey Mumford appeared with Olly Wilson for performances of their work at OSU more than a decade ago, but this is the one exception and I did not have a class where their music was discussed in any detail before or after the concert.
never felt a sense of home. That feeling that happens when you eat a favorite food that your mother used to cook or smell a scent that reminds you of childhood. This thing never happened when listening to these great composers. I remember being moved to tears when listening to Silvia Marcovici play Sibelius’ Violin Concerto in D minor with the Gothenburg symphony orchestra conducted by Neeme Järvi, but it was more an appreciation of the very beautiful writing and impassioned interpretation than it was a feeling of cultural connectivity. If it took me 27 years to come across composers of concert music that looked like me while studying concert music, how many lovers of art music may never come across the beauty that is a song cycle by Undine Smith Moore, or the turbulent operatic depiction of the life of Malcolm X from the heart and pen of Anthony Davis?

These thoughts led me to a conversation with Dr. Jan Edwards, professor of music education at The Ohio State University. I asked Dr. Edwards if she had come across the work of any Black composers either as a student or during the course of her academic career. Her response was surprising in that she had a piano teacher during her undergraduate work at Alabama State University who made sure she performed the works of Black composers along side that of the European masters. In conversations with other musicians who attended or taught at historically Black colleges I had heard that many were not taught the work of Black composers, and could not play jazz or sing gospel because it was not permitted. Her experience may not have been unique, but it was
definitely not the norm. This inspired her to begin her own investigation into composers of color, particularly the work of William Grant Still. It also helped to shape her thoughts on the integration of Black composers into the music education curriculum as early as possible. I left her office with an understanding that the art music of Black composers should not be taught as a separate unit or segment of the curriculum as I had previously thought. In fact, they should be placed in sequence with the European and Euro-American composers. This equalized exposure at the college level would hopefully do much to encourage more awareness on the part of all students and, in turn, would possibly bring about new scholarship. At the very least, we know that a strong education in music tends to make for a learned audience and an audience that is familiar with the works of Black composers, as it is that of European and Euro-American composers, may be more supportive than they are now, virtually unaware that Black composers of art music exist.

Other issues in public education that seem to be having an impact on music, in general is the emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) as opposed to STEAM (‘A’ for arts), and what seems to be continuous standardized testing, the results of which are connected to funding cuts or increases depending on performance. Currently, the Columbus City School district is considered a failing district based upon its recent report card.47 If the levy fails then music and arts education is on

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the list of cuts that will be made. That music is one of the things that is always in a vulnerable position, along with sports, physical education, and other non-STEM programs shows how important the study of music, and the myriad academic benefits that come from it, is to the schools administrators. If cut, Columbus City school children may have to forego an early education in music. If not, they still are not likely to get an education in music that includes the study of Black composers, or any contemporary composers, for that matter. It is very easy to see the problems that come from this approach to music education which, at best, is inadequate. Seen another way, this could be a prime opportunity for composers of art music to offer a service that fills a gap and introduces music, their own and that of their contemporaries, in a way that benefits the students, the composers, and the art music ensembles, if done correctly. We will hear from our composers on the subject of education in the solution portion of this document.

The second of the three chief issues prohibiting Black composers from being more relevant in the Black community and in the American cultural landscape is the sense that when one is out of sight, one is out of mind. The composers themselves, are physically invisible and virtually disbursed. Many composers have websites. But, with no infrastructure driving potential listeners and performers to the site, it is almost as if one is sitting at a bus stop watching traffic go by while waiting for a bus that only comes once a day and not being sure of the time. You may catch it, you may not. With relatively few performances, and a very small, uncoordinated web presence, people have to look
specifically for a composer by name in order to gain access to that particular musical world. Which leads us directly into the third obstacle, the lack of availability and accessibility outside of academia.

Many of the composers I know, of every ethnic group active in the creation of art music, have opted for the comfort of the academy. Here, they are able to earn a steady income with benefits and relative security in exchange for teaching and serving on various boards and committees. Most find this to be a minor inconvenience, and have found themselves reasonably productive. This security, fostered in an atmosphere that has often stripped art of its soul in favor of a level of complexity that justifies one's presence in the academic environment, often leads to a disconnect between the composer and audience. That is, it is very easy for the composer to find solace in the academic audience that appreciates a cold and calculating expression while losing a sense of the real communicative power that art music can have. Has had. Composers from Bach and Handel to Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Ravel, Debussy and many others up to the 20th century knew the importance of their music and its connection to the people. Haydn could not have maintained his post with the Esterházy family as long as he did if he had never found a balance between artistic sophistication and the practical expression that could be understood by his wealthy patron. It may be this balance that is key to a resurgence of art music generally. Certainly, the vernacular musical materials that many
Black composers have sought to keep out of their concert works may be the keys to connecting with an audience outside of the academy.

In addition to musical accessibility, the composers need to come out from the “ebony tower” and be physically present in the communities in which they live. If performances are few and far between, poorly attended, and lacking financial support, being active in the community may prove useful in building support and patronage as people tend to support what, and who, they know. The public is less likely to attend a concert of music by someone they have never heard of, which is partially why many composers are hard pressed to convince a major orchestra to premier their work, regardless of its merits. This goes back to the function of the composer. Understanding who we are, and what it is that we bring to the table, will help shape how we are viewed in the community as our presence, our being physically visible, can bring a new level of relevance.

These three issues: lack of adequate music education at all levels (especially as it relates to Black composers), lack of visibility with respect to infrastructure (virtual and physical) and performances, and not being accessible and available to the community have proven to be obstacles that, when looked at from a different perspective, are definitely not insurmountable. Composers can overcome these and many other issues mentioned earlier by developing plans for implementing outreach efforts in the community, using their status as university professors and/or artists as a platform to
provide a service. They can begin to think like entrepreneurs, turn obstacles into opportunities, and use those opportunities to increase their visibility by connecting with the community, developing a brand, and becoming relevant. Through the use of technology and partnerships with community organizations, opportunities will present themselves more often than not. We must start thinking like composers and begin to create our structures as opposed to trying to exist in boxes that may not be large enough for what we offer.

Possible Solutions

If we left fixing music education up to Dr. T.J. Anderson he says in Landscapes:

The first thing I would do about the situation of contemporary arts education is fire most of the teachers… First, we have allowed them- the administrative structures of the public school system- to deemphasize music and art to the point where we are almost crippled… It is no wonder that musical illiterates are running around.48

It is true, in spite of the efforts of the Music Educators National Conference and other similar organizations to educate the public on the benefits of studying music, public school administrators continue to lump music education in the “disposable” category when it comes time to tighten the fiscal belt. This is especially a disservice to students who cannot afford private lessons and access to the elite musicians in their city. The National Endowment for the Arts released the NEA Research Report #55 in March 2012 which finds that teenagers of low socio-economic status who have a history of involvement in the arts will have better academic outcomes than their peers who have not

48 Banfield, Landscapes, 34.
participated in the arts.\textsuperscript{49} We know that we cannot simply “fire most of the teachers” as Dr. Anderson suggested, but we can develop programming to enhance what is being taught, or supplement gaps in music education where they exist. At the very least we can follow Michael Woods’ practice of presenting the works of Black composers at Hamilton College. He writes that:

> Almost all black composers have to create their works of art and then defend and explain them as well as perform them. Almost all black art music is “Edutainment” I present the works of black composers in all of my classes at Hamilton College.\textsuperscript{50}

Many composers end up teaching about their work as it tends not to fall into accepted norms in this post-modern era. Adding an educational component to your portfolio will likely help in the acquisition of funding, especially if the presentation is created with urban school districts in mind.

Dr. Adderley offers an insightful perspective on the importance of music education at all levels:

> Despite the constant crisis that visual and performing arts programs experience in K-12 programs throughout the nation, it is evident that school music programs have had a significant impact on the development of musicians and audiences for over a century. Unfortunately, black students, or students from any other minority group, generally don’t have the same opportunities for education and mentoring as would-be composers of other races. This handicap doesn’t allow for enough musicians who have the talent and expertise to become exposed to the opportunities that are available to them or to develop the skills necessary to become a successful composer.

> Throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, collegiate music programs have been the primary source in the proliferation of art music. In addition to the formal study of music at colleges and universities, the academy has always been a safe haven for unveiling

\textsuperscript{49} Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies. NEA Research Report #55, March 2012

\textsuperscript{50} Lomax, \textit{Survey}, question 4.
new styles of music that would become the next great contemporary style of music that would influence the study and performance of music throughout the world.

I’ve been fortunate to have traveled throughout the nation and am unaware of a collegiate curriculum that requires the study of the work of Black composers. Although I cannot recall the particular institutions, I’ve noticed a number of specialized courses in music of the African diaspora, but I do not recall any course designed with a focus on the art music of Black composers.

The inclusion of Black composers as a requirement for collegiate-level musical training would certainly have a huge impact upon the recognition of the quality of music being created in the Black community as well as bring a level of recognition to the many great Black composers in this country. This level of recognition is far overdue and I’m hopeful that it will happen at some point in the future; however, I recognize that change in most collegiate curricula occurs at an incredibly slow pace and if the process is to be hurried along, it will only occur through a mass effort on the part of those of us who recognize the value and are willing to take the risks necessary to promote such changes.51

Like Undine Smith Moore, Adderley points to a systemic crisis that generally denies access to opportunities for minority students with musical talent. Creating a partnership with the schools could play a part in mitigating that, offering students an opportunity to see someone active in the field and exposing them to possibilities beyond the norm. Dr. Menefield agrees with Dr. Adderley’s assertion that “[t]he inclusion of Black composers as a requirement for collegiate-level musical training would certainly have a huge impact upon the recognition of the quality of music being created in the Black community as well as bring a level of recognition to the many great Black composers in this country.” He explains:

It would absolutely help elevate the position of Black composers if their music was included in collegiate curricula. If Black composers were viewed as “just composers” and given the same platform as composers of other races, things would change dramatically. Most people don’t know many Black art music composers even exist.52

51 Ibid., question 4.
52 Ibid., question 4.
This statement harmonizes with Dr. Edwards’ assertion that the music of Black composers should be taught along side that of other composers, and Hale Smith who believed that music should speak for itself and that the ethnicity of a composer should not overshadow the music.

Menefield also suggests that composers have to be creative and develop new approaches to educating and connecting with people to support the music. In my current work with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Columbus, I am working to create a comprehensive after-school arts program that will not only provide members of the club (ages 6-18) with training and performance opportunities in the arts, but will strive to create a pipeline from the Clubs to a college or vocation. The opportunity to do this work came from my responding to a request for proposal which came across my desk after a conversation with the Club’s director of operations about the positive impact arts education has on graduation rates and other measurable outcomes that fall into the Boys & Girls Clubs rubric. It is my hope that this program can and will be duplicated, but it is only one of many different ways composers can get involved in the community to help shape the next generation of composers and performers while building relationships that could potentially serve to fill a hall or provide opportunities for commissions and performances.

“Autonomy is the key. That is when change is most effective,” says Dr. Menefield, and I agree. My work with the Boys & Girls Club is non-exclusive. It will not prevent me from working with other organizations, composing or performing. Yet, it offers an opportunity
to create something that can be marketed and duplicated around the country, and provides another source of income. This is the kind of creativity that can be useful to composers and brings a level of relevance to their work.

Other methods of outreach available to artists in general is the Artist in the Schools Program. These exist in some way in every major American city I have visited and offer an opportunity for composers to share their work and that of other Black composers with school aged children while receiving a small stipend. Often, these programs are run through local arts organizations that award grants. Becoming acquainted with these types of programs also makes one known to the people who make decisions about who gets what grants, and helps to develop a relationship that may push some of those funds towards the composer. Along with the artist in the schools, composers can work with local religious and community organizations to put on concerts that feature the music of the composer while raising money for a particular cause, or is the result of a workshop with musicians in the community.

These community involvement suggestions are not normal fare for many composers of art music, and many Black composers may think it unfair to even have to think about these different approaches to getting music played, but if our work is not being accepted in traditional settings then we must be creative and create new settings for our work. Value can be found in these alternate opportunities with the creation of a
balance. Of the potential impact of community involvement by Black composers, Dr. Woods writes:

Yes, I do find value in this. Community engagement is vital to the success of just about anything artistic. I have seen firsthand how working with children in after school programs or leading workshops is an effective way to educate students about genres of music, instruments and composers they were likely not previously exposed to. I believe it can be an effective to raise the level of visibility and relevance of Black composers of art music in the community. The key is how you approach it. A good balance of entertainment, lecturing and discussion will effective promote this message and lead to positive results.

Indeed, “the key is how you approach it.” In order for community outreach to be beneficial, all parties must find value. The composer needs to be flexible in delivery methods while being true to the information that he or she wants to communicate and to the reasons for the involvement. The impact is lessened and time is wasted without a clear vision. I have found that engaging the community is a great way to build relationships and support for a composers artistic product, but creating a good relationship with the community without having a product for them to support and be excited about may prove to be a wasted effort.

Traditionally, composers worked in a patronage system. Talented Europeans composers like Haydn used their talents in service of Kings, Queens, and aristocrats. Beethoven broke the cycle when he became one of the first composers to exist outside of the system and support himself with monies earned from publication and commissions. This can also be seen in parts of West Africa where the professional composer/performers called Griot or Jali would serve the wealthy and powerful. It is said that King Mansa

\[^{53}\text{Ibid., question 8.}\]
Musa (Mali) took hundreds of musicians in his employ as he traveled to Mecca. All composed and improvised music in praise of their King. Like their European brothers, the Griots began to develop a more entrepreneurial approach to the way they operated and gained artistic control at the expense of less relative security. It is imperative that Black composers work to develop their own products (recordings, scores, concerts and other materials) given the trickle of performances and publishing opportunities we have within the existing system today. We’ll look first at developing infrastructure to support the work of Black composers.

In this modern era, the word ‘infrastructure’ implies the basic physical and virtual organizational structures and facilities. We will define physical infrastructure for Black composers as the establishment of organizational structures such as 501c3 tax structure, venues, performers, scholars and the composers themselves working together to produce, present, and preserve the works of Black composers. Virtual infrastructure will denote any web-based vehicle to promote the work of Black composers.

Creating A Website: Your Virtual Hub

When reading any of the numerous articles floating around the internet on websites designed to support independent musicians, one of the items that tops every list of the very first steps towards a successful career in music is to develop a web presence. Why is this likely the most important first step? It is because even though there may not

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54 New Oxford American Dictionary
yet be an audience for your work, we are now living in an age where people expect to be able to access content in the immediate present. Creating a website and pertinent connections to social media allows for those who are coming into contact with your work to access information, additional works, essays, blogs and videos while your name is fresh in their minds. This is a vital key in connecting with, and building an audience as it is very likely that not taking advantage of the time that an audience member is in the concert hall will be a missed opportunity since the chances of people remembering to look a composer up after the concert is very rare in these times of instant gratification where media, and information overload is the norm.

To start, creating a website with all the bells and whistles can be very expensive. But creating one that has all the basic information is now a cheap and relatively inexpensive process. With the advent of websites like www.wix.com, anyone can create a professional looking virtual hub for free and a relatively small investment of time. Essential information consists of biographical information, samples of scores and recordings of the work, and information to purchase recordings, scores and services as it suites ones purpose (commissions, orchestrating, conducting etc…). Organization of the site need not be difficult either. Many opt for the home page (the first page people see when visiting your website) to contain a combination of touch points including

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55 To be sure, we want our audiences to concentrate on hearing the work before them, but we must understand the times we live in where many in our audience are adept at multitasking and prefer to have both a physical and virtual experience simultaneously. Composers who have created an adequate web presence are, in effect, enhancing the experience of their listeners, not detracting from the appreciation of a real time performance.
biographical information and electronic commerce. I would suggest that the home page be limited to important updates and biographical information and a second page be dedicated to the sampling and purchasing available recordings and scores.

Costs associated with websites normally stem from hosting fees to a company like www.godaddy.com or www.bluehost.com where you rent space on the web to park your website. Other costs are tied to storage and the amount of information that can be uploaded, downloaded and streamed from the site and how quickly this information is transferred. These storage and transfer fees need not be prohibitive as many of these services can be found elsewhere for free. As composers, it is of the utmost necessity to be able share music (mp3s and scores) and video files. Video can easily shared for free by creating accounts at www.youtube.com or www.vimeo.com for no cost and simply linking or embedding the code generated from your video on the appropriate page of your site. Visitors can then view your video on your site that streams from the other sites seamlessly without leaving your site. The same method works for music. By creating accounts with sites like www.soundcloud.com and www.grooveshark.com on is allowed to host music files, at no initial cost, and stream them from the host site to ones website. There will be a fee associated with the music sites after a certain amount of music has

56 Hosting fees are monthly ($7-10 depending on the package) or yearly payments ($120-150 depending on the package) made to a company that keeps your site visible to the public.

57 When I signed up with www.soundcloud.com I was able to upload about four hours of music before being required to pay for extra storage.
been posted, but that should not stop you from posting several compositions to begin with.

There is an added incentive for uploading audio and visual content to other sites. The internet works as an integrated system. The more your name and content is spread around the net, the higher the likelihood of your links to appear on the first page of a search on google, or any of the other web browsers. This is commonly referred to as search engine optimization. There are companies that will help to optimize your results on several search engines for a fee, but using services like this are unnecessary costs. Once you have posted your content and successfully set up active links on your website, it is just as easy to send all the links to friends, family, students and colleagues. The more they click on the links, the more optimized your results become. In the same way that operating in groups helps to defray costs and increase sales in the physical world, linking websites helps to increase traffic and optimize search engine results. So, set up your website and create a page of suggested links. This will help educate people you come into contact with on composers you like and your links on their pages will do the same for you.

Social Media

The world wide web is just that, a web of information that links similar types of information together to create a base of knowledge that anyone can access, if they know
what to look for. Setting up and integrating social media is the second step in the process of establishing a solid virtual presence. Before we get into a discussion of the benefits of social media and a brief description of some of the more popular social media outlets, it must be understood that contemporary audiences are looking for an experience. No longer can we be secure in our thinking that just because our work has achieved our artistic goals, and has maybe even been well received by critics, that this means it will reach some type of critical mass that translates into sales of scores and recordings. A quick glance through business journals shows several articles about companies working to improve the experience their customer has connected to a particular product. In a recent NPR story\textsuperscript{58} Apple is reported to have hired the former CEO of high-end clothing company Burberry to improve customer experience which, in turn, adds value to the Apple brand and justifies the extra expense that comes with the purchase of an Apple product. Social Media is a way for composers to improve the customer experience as it relates to establishing a brand related to concert music by Black composers.

According to the 2013 Social Media Marketing Industry Report, a survey of over three thousand marketing professionals that seeks to understand how they use and value social media in the effort to promote various products, sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn were regarded very highly as effective marketing tools. As a composer, I would add Twitter and sites designed for sharing music and photos like the

\textsuperscript{58} http://www.npr.org/2013/10/18/236696997/apple-hires-burberry-ceo-to-improve-customer-experience

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aforementioned Soundcloud and a relatively new site called Instagram. Time is always an
issue but, in many cases, these sites can all be connected so updating one, can update all.
This may seem redundant, but as I stated earlier, the more places your name and content
appear on the web, the more optimized searches for your content become. Also, this is a
way to be virtually in as many places as possible from a central hub (your website). Now,
what do these sites do and how do they help you?

YouTube, and Soundcloud have been mentioned before. I will add that posting on
both sites can automatically trigger a message on Facebook and Twitter. Facebook is a
networking site that allows you to connect with people all over the world to share
pictures, regular updates on life and living, as well as music and professional
opportunities. Facebook is also a nice tool in that it allows you to separate your personal
self from your professional self with the ability to create a page that only your friends and
family can see and another ‘fan page’ that people have to ‘like’ in order to gain access to
content posted on the page. By clicking the like option, fans are able to see content posted
by the composer in their ‘news feed,’ the central hub for viewing new information on the
Facebook interface. You are also able to share this content with your friends and families
on your personal page. Twitter is a site that allows you to communicate with the
‘twitterverse’ in increments of 140 characters. While messages can be longer, only the
first 140 characters will be shown in the information stream. Interested parties can click
on the post to see the rest of the message. I have learned that Twitter is a quick and easy
way to keep the communication going with persons interested in my work the world over, and it isn’t as time consuming as one would think as there are many people that I’ve connected with in the twittersverse that I would not “friend” on Facebook. I have set up my fan page on Facebook to automatically update Twitter so that I only have to update one site. This update can also be seen on other of my social media pages through the use of widgets that connect to the Facebook page. In this case, a widget is similar to the information ticker that streams updates on the stock market and other news items of interest at the bottom or top of the cable news screens (CNN, MSNBC, and Bloomberg have continuous news updates through their ticker). The composer can now literally reach thousands of people in a relatively short period of time by fully integrating these sites.

LinkedIn is slightly different in that it is geared towards making more formal, business oriented connections. It can be connected to other sites but the messaging used on this application may need to be different from the less formal ones. I use it to make the same types of announcements made on Twitter and Facebook, but I am aware that this audience is different. Here, I have worked to virtually connect with decision makers whether they be board members, artistic directors, conductors, or any person that may be in a position to help me get a piece performed. I am connected in the twittersverse with ensembles, managers working with ensembles I would like to see perform my music, fans and other composers. Here is an example of how a “tweet” (communication on twitter) would differ from an announcement or update on LinkedIn:
Twitter: Super excited about completing my 1st ballet! Can’t wait 2 have it performed (: 

LinkedIn: Excited to have completed my first ballet and am looking forward to the first performance!

Each communication is posted with a picture of the front page of the full score, but the language used on the LinkedIn site is more formal that that used on twitter. Interesting items can be shared by people who are following your work and your updates. This means that the composers web is extended since there will be people that you do not know and who may never have heard of you and your music in the networks of the people who have shared your update. This can eventually lead to increased traffic on your website and other social media outlets which is the top benefit of social media marketing according to the 2013 Social Media Marketing Industry Report. Increased traffic means that more people are at least looking at, and hopefully listening to, your work. More listeners carries the potential for more fans, more sales, and more performances all because you have successfully integrated your web presence. It is virtually impossible to be successful without a viable web presence. I would add that it is not prudent to ignore the opportunity to connect with people who have heard you music, or may never hear your work otherwise. This also gives your growing audience a chance to share something they find new and exciting to their friends which, again, works to your advantage.

Another important part of being an entrepreneur is developing and selling product. Constructing an integrated web presence is a very important way to sell music and scores directly to fans and performers. I asked the survey respondents to share their
thoughts on producing a recording. Dr. Woods’ comments highlight the importance of having a recorded example of your work when states:

… I have produced an album of 9 of my recent compositions. It was a great deal of work but I did not mind. I felt that I had to have a calling card by which I could say to any person at any time “Here, just listen to this and you will see what I represent” This is of the greatest degree of importance because the average man is not going to read some complex score. We must go from process to product if we expect to be heard.59

Cedric Adderley highlights some of the difficulties surrounding the independent production of a recording of his work:

Although my work has been recorded by others for large-scale commercial projects, I’ve never produced a professional recording of my own works as a single project. The bulk of my catalog is for large ensembles and the costs associated with such a project have prevented me from making a full-recording of these works. A professional recording of my smaller works can be produced within a reasonable budget and I expect to launch such a project in the very near future.60

Many times the costs associated with recording concert music can be prohibitive, but it is not impossible and there are many ways to bring product to the market and cutting out record companies can increase profit margins over time. The process is fairly simple and Dr. Menefeld sums it up nicely in his response to the seventh survey question when he writes, “I saved money, hired musicians, rehearsed and recorded.”

My experience having produced 12 recordings of my original music have led me to approach a recording in segments. Knowing what music you want to record is key to starting the process. I have found that records are easier, and more cost effective if the

59 Lomax, Survey, question 7.
60 Ibid., question 7.
whole recording revolves around a single ensemble which allows you to negotiate one
price and reduces logistical issues that may arise when working with a large number of
people. Wasted time and other unforeseen setbacks will cost money and may derail a
project. It is also a good idea to work to include one or two other composers in the
process. This can make the costs even less and has the potential for the music of each
composer to reach an audience that follows one composer involved and may not be
familiar with the others. Again, the idea is to have a product that represents your work
and serves as ambassador to new listeners and potential performers or programmers.

Once the decision has been made as to what music will be recorded and the type
of ensemble some research must be done towards the creation of a budget. The first
consideration is that of the ensemble. The American Federation of Musicians Live
Recording Agreement has some very strict, and in my view unreasonable, policies for
how recordings are made and the per musician costs associated with the recording
process. Stipulations that mandate a regular session be three hours long with two ten
minute breaks where “there may be recorded not more than fifteen minutes of recorded
music” is completely one sided. This alone makes the costs exponentially higher than
they have to be, and at a rate of $339.20 per musician (generally twice that amount for
the maestro), time is of the essence. There are other options for orchestral recordings
which include working with orchestras in smaller American markets where there may be
more wiggle room when working out the budget, or going overseas to work with an
orchestra in Eastern Europe, or the Middle East. Another option is to send your score in its Sibelius or Finale format to companies that will extract it and create an excellent midi rendering using Virtual Studio Technology (VST) instruments. VST instruments are the standard in midi music production and are used in musics as diverse as Hip-Hop and Country, Gospel and Smooth Jazz. There are sound libraries such as the Vienna Philharmonic library that have spent a lot of time and effort to create excellent hyper samples of orchestral instruments allowing composers and engineers the flexibility of multiple articulations and expressions to create a virtual performance from the score. One of the leading companies in this area is Ravel Virtual Studios.

I submitted a score of my ballet for full orchestra to Ravel Virtual Studios in order to initiate a conversation about the costs tied to achieving a professional midi rendering of the work and was surprised at the response. I was contacted by the director of music, Ron Artinian, who gave me an initial quote of $6,100 to render a piece for large orchestra containing 1178 measures of music and lasting 42 minutes. With a student discount of $923 the total cost would come to $5227.00. Ron explains that “[t]his quote represents a price of roughly $127.49 per minute and $4.45 per measure.” They do have a satisfaction guarantee and, judging from the amount of communication thus far, are keen on working very closely with the composer to bring about the desired results. This includes

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61 Orchestras in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Armenia are developing excellent reputations for being competent orchestras whose services can be rented at a much lower price than here in the States.

62 http://www.ravel-vs.com/
instructions on how to go about marking the score so the engineers know exactly what you want where, which means editing the score with notes on specifics in tempi, dynamics and articulations. While a recording by a real orchestra is always preferred, it might be more cost effective to have a professional rendering that the composer can present to an orchestra as a means of presenting a more complete picture of the work than does a score from an unknown composer. In my case, it would allow me to give a recording to the choreographers I work with so they can start on the ballet itself while I continue to search for a real orchestra to perform the work.

The music and ensemble(s) have been selected and you have worked out an arrangement with the musicians. Now it is time do decide where the recording will take place. There is plenty of latitude to work with here. There are great recordings that have been made in studios, churches, school auditoriums and concert halls, homes with great acoustics, and even basements. It depends on how much you have and want to spend, as well as what space makes the most sense for the ensemble you wish to record. Studios in the Central Ohio area tend to average hourly costs between $60-80 but many do not have an acoustic piano or larger rooms that give a more ambient sound to a classical recording. Room size is not a deal breaker! Digital recording software can do amazing things with reverb that can greatly enhance a “dry” space. I have included several websites in the appendix that feature “do-it-yourself” information and advise on everything from best equipment for recording, mixing and mastering on a budget to microphone selection and
placement. It is very likely that access to school of music facilities, churches and creating relationships with community organizations can mitigate the costs of renting a recording studio which can save you hundreds of dollars!

The DIY websites also contain information on inexpensive ways to outsource mixing, mastering, and CD duplication. Again, once you have decided to embark on the journey of recording your own music, you are going to be faced with time versus money issues. If you have time, it might work in your favor to learn digital audio workstation (DAW) programs like ProTools and Logic which would allow you to be both engineer and producer. I agree with many audio engineers who suggest a different person record, mix and master, but sometimes you have to do what you have to do. I have been the composer/arranger, recording engineer, post production (mixing and mastering) engineer, and cover art designer on several projects. The bad thing about taking on every roll in the process is that it often takes longer and I tended to doubt my skills as I was learning on the fly. On the plus side, I saved a lot of money. The key is to be flexible, realistic, and have a few trusted people listen who are comfortable being completely honest. At the end of the day, having a great recording of your work will speak for itself, and I have never had anyone question the process in a negative way.

The last step in the recording process is to have the artwork created and send everything off to a company like Discmakers to have CDs duplicated. Fees vary by package but one can have a very nice design and three to five hundred CDs made for less
than $2000. The deal gets better at one thousand units and is best at twenty-five hundred copies, but how many copies you order depends on how you intend to use the music. Right now, if you supply the artwork in the correct format with a completed master copy of your recording, you can purchase the basic 1000 CD package for $999. Discmakers also provides post production and design services at competitive prices\(^63\) should you choose to use them. Once you have your completed artwork, physical CDs, and electronic copies (mp3s) you can upload to any of several websites that allow your work to be purchased at major web-based outlets like iTunes, Amazon, and Google Play at a relatively low price. Discmakers has a partnership with CDBABY.com that will sell your physical CDs and help you manage your presence in the digital marketplace. The artist can receive up to $.60 on the dollar from digital sales\(^64\) and all of these sites allow you to place links to your music from your site to theirs so people who are interested can visit your home page and be directed right to your new release. It is now up to you to drive traffic to the pages where your music can be purchased, which integrated social media platform comes into play.

**Build Supportive Organizations**

A last but very important point is the need to create lasting physical, or real world organizations that will help composers produce, present, and preserve their work. Several

\(^63\) $450 for design with a one time proof and $500 for mastering up to ten songs. [www.discmakers.com](http://www.discmakers.com)

\(^64\) artists get paid from their music being “streamed” or listened to online but the revenue generated from this type of transaction is insignificant, even in what would be considered the most successful case as a million streams may only net the artist around $30. This is being addressed by major music corporations but is not likely to be resolved soon.
organizations like the *Society of Black Composers* have come and gone, but none have had the staying power as has organizations such as *American Society of Composers Authors and Publishers*, or the *Society of Composers Incorporated*. There’s no need to reinvent the wheel. These organizations have been around for many years and have done a great service to their members. I have been a member of both and did not feel as though my work, and the vision I have for my career fit within the bounds of these organizations. As other composers have done before us, it is important that Black composers come together to build real world infrastructure that includes scholars, performers, and venues that encourage the creation and performance of new works. In the same way that Black musicians found an audience on the ‘chitlin circuit’ in the middle 20th century, Black composers can create a network of colleges, churches, and community arts organizations that will regularly host concerts, symposiums, and offer space to rehearse and record new music. Incorporating performers and ensembles gives the composer access to qualified musicians and partners in the presentation of their work. The presence of scholars in the organization is also important as these are the persons, along with the composers themselves, who would write the books, liner notes, critiques and include the scores and recordings in their courses thereby introducing the music, musicians and composers to new audiences.
Creating supportive organizations is a vital aspect of bringing the work of Black composers to the people. Cedric Adderley describes the benefit and purpose of such an organization thus:

...[S]uch an organization would be of tremendous value to the work of Black composers and I’d love to be a part of one if it were to be created. In fact, I’ve been approached on a number of occasions to discuss the formation of a Black Composers Alliance and have many informal alliances with other Black composers that have been very productive in furthering all of our careers.

As far as the creation of a more formal organization that offers multiple professional development opportunities for Black composers, I feel that those of us who are uniquely positioned to develop such an organization to its fullest potential may be obligated professionally and personally to a level that will not allow the organization to reach its full potential. Such an organization could be immensely valuable to Black composers, but such an organization requires a great deal of time, effort, and financial support.

I believe that a small group of dedicated individuals could definitely lay the groundwork and establish a professional organization for Black composers. There are a number of successful support organizations for various areas of specialization within the field of music that could serve as models for a Black composer group; however, due to the required critical mass to move such an organization along to the point where it will sustain itself and still serve the needs of the membership, it will be particularly challenging to complete such a monumental task.

I would like to see such an organization provide professional development opportunities for Black composers that will lead to the study and performance of our music by a wider audience. By providing a support system for the membership and a multi-layered structure for the enhancement of our careers, Black composers will develop new markets as well as new networks for future composition projects.65

As Dr. Adderley suggests, the creation of an organization that would provide such services as professional development, a centralized virtual hub, collective funding and fundraising under a 501c3 tax status, shared costs and concerted marketing efforts to produce, present, and protect the work of Black composers is no easy task. Like all non-profit organizations, a board would have to be formed, an operational structure that

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65 Lomax, Survey, question 9.
includes monthly or yearly dues must be agreed upon to cover basic operational costs. These monies would go to putting on concerts and, eventually, the hiring a staff of “dedicated individuals” that would be responsible for the acquisition of funding and performance partners, connections to media outlets, maintaining an integrated web presence, providing an outlet for audio/visual content, “developing new markets and networks,” and providing members with opportunities to identify and mentor young composers through contests and community workshops.

This is what the CCC aims to do over time. The question is will those who are, in fact, “uniquely positioned to develop such an organization to its fullest potential” prioritize this tremendously important vehicle for the exposure and sustainability of the work of Black composers at a level that will see it through its infancy to a level of maturity where it is operating on its own, or will it end up like its predecessors?
Recapitulation: Thematic Resolution and Conclusion

Black composers face a crisis of identity. To be, or not to be Black: that is the question. As American composers we align ourselves with the best of what this country has to offer but, as Black composers, we allow ourselves the best of three cultures; that of Africa, Europe, and America. Being Black is not a celebration of our Africanness at the expense of our Americanness or the influence of Europe. It is a celebration of the rich confluence of cultures that create an ethnically Black American. To be an ethnically Black composer is to have the ability to draw from the deepest well to create an expression that speaks to all of humanity. It is precisely that Blackness that can and will differentiate our artistic product from the rest. To celebrate our Blackness as composers is to bridge divides and create unity. The issues of identity as a Black person in America is challenging to some who view their identity as neither completely African, nor European. “Ethnic Blackness” is a fusion of cultures that could only happen in America. This unique blending of cultures is present in the work itself.

My grandmother’s question as to whether or not composing a ballet for full orchestra was something that was done by “white people” was not a surprise given the lack of awareness of Black artistic output in the concert world. What my grandmother, and many others better acquainted with concert music, often fail to recognize in the works of Black composers is the ever-present attempt at cultural synthesis. Consciously
or unconsciously, the product of every African American composer is the amalgamation of, or at the very least, the coming to terms with what it means to be ethnically Black in America. Halfway through composing *The Butterfly Princess*, I realized that I had unconsciously pitted the musical languages of Western European Art music and Jazz against each other in a way similar to what has come to represent my conscious quest toward an organic hybrid of these languages and something that symbolizes my American experience, while also being acceptable to the academy. Here the European language was used to represent the protagonist and a stylized Jazz language was used to speak for the antagonist.

The piece is, in many ways, an oxymoron. The musical language that I learned growing up is used to represent the antagonist, while the language acquired in the academy symbolizes the protagonist. I would like this piece to be universal, and appeal to all audiences, but I know that African Americans are generally not regular concert goers. Why am I composing a piece for people who may never hear it? Why use more than one musical language? Why pitt the formal musical language against the vernacular one in the way that I did? Why do I feel the need to be this type of cultural bridge anyway? The answer to all of this is that I am Black, and it is my belief that who, and what I am must be present in my work. That “Am-ness” is a unique blend of the best music Africa, Europe, and America have produced. It is the product of an experience distinctive to
being Black in America and, in my view, contains the makings of a brand. Our Blackness is our Brand!

This brand can be developed and built upon through the creation of a viable organization whose sole focus is to empower Black composers. It will enable them to produce new works through connecting composers with performers who will premier and record the work, scholars who will present and preserve the work, and an audience who will attend concerts and help to support the work financially to ensure that it is showcased in the best possible manner. The individual composers can expand the brand through their own integrated web presence and by working within the organization to promote each other, identify and mentor new talent, and through community engagement. This work is neither easy, nor expedient. I estimate that it will take the better part of the next decade or more of a concerted effort to create a sustainable environment for the work of Black composers because we are essentially starting from scratch.

Once we have accepted who we are and have formed a consensus around our identity, we must then educate the public and share with them the ways in which our presence adds value to their existence. We can serve as important representatives of a major cultural component of the American landscape and it is imperative that we are seen and heard in Black America. It is important that young Black Americans see educated, thinking, and creative people, who look like them and are taking an interest in their lives and the well being of the community. We, like the conscious rappers and conscious jazz
musicians are the modern Griots and Jalia! We must compose the soundtrack to our collective existence!

I understand that many, including the composers themselves, may not agree with any of the proposed solutions presented here, for any number of reasons. I will address those concerns by elaborating on the eight issues Dr. Banfield describes as the “political mine and mind fields”66 that the Black composer will wrestle with. I found that thinking through these “mind fields” were very helpful in helping me to shape a vision for how I want my career as a composer to evolve.

1) *Finding the opportunity to do one’s art:* Black composers must build infrastructure in the community and in the academy in order to be heard more often while creating performance opportunities for young musicians and staking out a position in the cultural health of the community.

2) *Liberation of voice:* One does not have to worry about being free to speak in one's own home. The creation of a venue that will lend itself to the cultivation of Black concert music is imperative.

3) *Audience:* Everyone! Social media, recordings, and maintaining a physical presence in the community will begin to attract listeners who are looking to hear your work because they know you, or have heard of you, from someone you have been in direct contact with in the community you live in or visited.

4) Acceptance and Placement: Why fight to belong somewhere you may not be wanted? Use the available tools to go where you are welcomed and make that into the most prestigious environment you can.

5) *Documentation:* It is up to us to produce, perform, and preserve our works at all cost. If you do not think the work worthy of investment, how can you expect others to?

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6) **Workplace, job:** We have to rethink what it means to be a professional composer. Tenure track positions at colleges and universities are getting harder to come by but, there is a lack of good music teachers at the primary and secondary level. There are plenty of positions in the human services industry just waiting for creative types to give them the next great idea that leads to more funding opportunities and greater sustainability. Freedom can also come in the form of entrepreneurship.

7) **Language dilemma:** tone row or blues scale. Be fearless and write from your heart. They might not hear it now but, they will. That is why it is important for Black composers to create their own “home.”

8) **Disruption of the Western cultural formula:** The Western cultural formula has stood on its own since the ancient Greeks learned about culture in ancient Kemet. They do not need the contributions of Black composers. We should be working to create and/or re-define the African/African-American cultural formula to represent who we are as a people.

It is my belief that the work of defining who we are as composers will help us communicate the worth of our work to our communities. Understanding that worth will hopefully push us to be present in our communities in such a way that we become relevant not just as artist, but as thinkers and doers that have a stake in the people who will, in turn, invest in us as we have in them. Our physical presence outside of academia creates relevance, and our relevance will lead to greater visibility. This return to the hearts and minds of the people who we hope will be engaged, challenged, and elevated by our work must also come with a change in the work itself. Like Haydn, and many other great composers of the 17th and 18th century, our music must again speak to the people as they cannot be uplifted and positively provoked unless the work meets them
where they are at some level and takes them where we would like them to be. That is the crux of the artist-non-artist relationship. We see and teach them to see!

I will defer to an elder to bring this to an appropriate close. Few of the issues are unique to Black composers, and none of the solutions will only work for us. We are, however, the only ones that understand the issues as they relate to us and, for now, the only ones who can work to turn the obstacles into opportunities. To that end, the great William Grant Still advises us to “evaluate the past, present and future in music, and begin again to write with heart instead of brains, with love instead of disdain, and with attention to spiritual as well as scientific values. Experimentation for the sake of experimentation can only produce a poor substitute for music, and we are now in need of real music, not contrived sounds.” Real music will create lasting connections, communicate a personal and cultural truth, excite, uplift and edutain. These are the hallmarks of our brand. This is my sense of what is means to be a Black composer in America.
Bibliography


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Appendix A: Biographies of Composers

Cedric Adderley, D.M.A.

An accomplished composer and music educator, Cedric Adderley enjoys a multi-faceted career and maintains an active schedule of artistic engagements throughout the nation and abroad. He has earned numerous accolades including winning the Detroit Symphony Orchestra’s annual composer search for his Symphony No. 1 and being selected as Composer of the Year by the South Carolina Music Teachers Association. His original music is featured on several commercial recordings including Distinguished Music for the Developing Band, volumes 1, 2, and 3 (Mark Custom Recordings) as well as The Adderley/Holiday Piano Duo Project (Albany Records). His works for band and orchestra are published by Grand Mesa and TRN Music Publishers.

Ensembles throughout the United States and abroad have performed the music of Cedric Adderley including the South Carolina Philharmonic, the Augusta Symphony, the Rutgers Philharmonia, the University of Miami Wind Ensemble, the Moravian Philharmonic, and the Bulgarian National Radio Symphony. As a trumpeter and vocalist, he has performed with many legendary recording artist including Ray Charles, Olivia Newton-John, and Louie Bellson. He has also toured the southeastern United States with several variety bands including the O’Kaysions (known for the hit single I’m a Girl Watcher) and Shagtime (known for the hit single Mr. Beach).

A native of Columbia, South Carolina, he holds a Bachelor’s degree in music education from East Carolina University and both the Master of Music and Doctor of Music Arts in composition from the University of South Carolina. He currently resides in Columbus, Ohio and serves as the Dean of the College at Capital University.
William Menefield, D.M.A.

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, Menefield began his music studies at the age of five in Suzuki violin at the Schiel Primary School for Arts Enrichment. He later studied cello for nine years with Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra cellist Norman Johns. Primarily self-taught on piano, Menefield served as the pianist for the Shroder Paideia Middle School Choir from the age of 12 through the end of his junior year of high school. From 1996-1998 he served as principal cellist for the School for Creative and Performing Arts Orchestra and for the Seven Hills Sinfonietta.

Menefield’s debut album, *Big Will Leaps In*, was released in the spring of 1999 on the J-Curve Records Label, a Cincinnati company. The jazz piano album later reached number 13 on the national Gavin Jazz Charts.

Menefield has performed at many venues in Cincinnati including the Aronoff Center for the Arts, where he initiated the Cincinnati Arts Association’s Emerging Artist Concert Series; the Cincinnati Art Museum; the Phoenix, and Music Hall.

William Menefield is the recipient of numerous awards and scholarships including the Corbett-Mayerson Scholarship Award in 1997; a scholarship to Capital University Conservatory of Music in Columbus, Ohio; a grant from the Otto M. Budig Family Foundation; and a scholarship from the Jazz Club of Sarasota. In February 1997, at the age of 16, Menefield became the youngest recipient of an Applause Magazine Imagemaker Award.

Dr. Menefield is the holder Bachelor’s degree in music composition from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and a Doctor of Music Arts in composition from the University of Texas at Austin.
Michael Woods, D.M.A.

“Doctuh” Michael Woods majored in composition and minored in string bass at Indiana University (M.M.), and the University of Oklahoma (D.M.A.). He was the first African-American to receive a doctorate in composition from Oklahoma University. He also received a M.M. Degree in jazz studies from Indiana University. Woods has written more than 600 compositions in various styles including choral, orchestral, and chamber works, as well as jazz combo and big band charts. He has had his musical compositions performed by the Albany Symphony, the North Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, the Central New York Jazz Orchestra, and the Tulsa Philharmonic. Dr. Woods is also director and bassist for the Zoe Jazz Band and bassist for the Omniverse Jazz Ensemble; both groups often perform his compositions. At Hamilton College, Woods teaches courses in jazz history, jazz arranging, and jazz improvisation. He also directs the College’s Jazz Ensemble.
Appendix B: DIY Websites

https://www.artspire.org/ProfessionalDevelopment/Programs/TheProfitableArtist.aspx

www.cdbaby.com

www.discmakers.com

www.diymusician.cdbaby.com

http://ezinearticles.com/?How-to-Become-a-Successful-Independent-Artist-or-Songwriter&id=220633 accessed 8/22/13

www.facebook.com

http://www.indieartisttools.com/article-diy.html

www.indiebible.com

www.musicthinktank.com

www.radioairplay.com

www.soundcloud.com

www.tunecore.com

www.twitter.com

www.youtube.com

www.vimeo.com
Appendix C: Ensembles and Organizations (infrastructure building)

http://www.blackpearlco.org/web/home.aspx

http://www.catalystquartet.com/

http://www.colum.edu/CBMR/What_We_Do/Performance_and_Outreach/Performance/Black%20Music%20Repertory%20Ensemble/

http://harlemquartet.com/

http://www.imaniwinds.com/

http://www.karenwalwyn.com/

http://www.marianandersonstringquartet.com/

http://www.meishaadderley.com/

http://www.soulful-song.org/darin_atwater.asp

http://sphinxmusic.org/index.html
Appendix D: Lomax Survey Inventory on Issues Related to the Black Composer

Document Interview Questions

How do you define Black Art Music? Do you make a distinction between art and non-art music (i.e. Jazz vs. Classical)

How do you view the role or function of Black composers who focus on art music, or higher craft music, in the American cultural landscape generally, and in Black American culture specifically?

Do you think there are barriers to success that are unique to Black composers of art music? If yes, what do you see as the primary obstacles to success?

What role do you think education plays in the proliferation of art music? Are you aware of any collegiate curricula that include the works of Black composers? If yes, please elaborate. If no, do you think that including Black composers and their work in music curricula would help to elevate the position of the composers in American culture?

In your opinion, what can be done to increase the level of visibility and relevance of Black composers of art music in the Black community?

What efforts do you make regularly, or have you made in the past to promote your work?

Have you ever produced a professional recording of your work on your own? If yes, please describe that process. If no, please explain.

Do you find value in community engagement both at the artistic level and from an educational standpoint beyond the academy (i.e. Participating in or leading community ensembles, working in after school programs and/or doing workshops in local schools etc…). What, if any, impact do you think this work can have on raising the level of visibility and relevance of Black composers of art music to the community, particularly the Black community?

Do you find value in the creation of an organization that caters to and supports the work of Black composers of art music? If so, how would you like to see it function? If no, why not?