

MUSIC

A Social Experience

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PEARSON

Boston Columbus Indianapolis New York San Francisco Upper Saddle River
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LISTENING GUIDE (*Continued*)

0:59	A section Clarinetist "Barney" Bigard takes over the A section melody. The feel is lighter and jazzier than in Tizol's version. The accompaniment—now woodblocks and muted brass instruments—has changed as well. Bigard's improvised flourish at the end seems to abandon the melody altogether.
1:15	A section Trumpeter Cootie Williams has been growling in the background all along. Now he takes the lead with a jazzy solo that is both brisk and sharply punctuated.
1:31	A section Williams's solo continues, but now he exploits his plunger mute. The tones are longer and more flowing. It sounds as if he is telling a story with his trumpet.
1:48	B section The sequence of featured soloists is broken as the spotlight is given to the saxophone section as a whole. Musical individuality has been replaced by the voice of community.
2:04	A section Carney takes over the melody. The ensemble growls its approval. Greer moves back from woodblocks to tom-toms.
2:15	A section conclusion Tizol interrupts Carney. The band drops out. Rhythmic time stops while Tizol plays a short operatic-like cadenza. Notice the lack of tonal resolution in both melody and harmony. A gong strike closes the song, but one cannot help but feel that the stop is temporary, a moment of stasis between action.

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

- "Caravan" is considered a highpoint of Ellington's "jungle" sound. Yet, the song seems to be referencing the nomadic life of the North African desert. What is jungle-like in the sound texture?
- Consider the song's trajectory from jungle to jazz to closing cadenza. What might the range suggest?
- Regional music styles are far less distinctive today than they were in the 1930s. Why might this be?

ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

- "Caravan" has been recorded over 1,000 times by artists ranging from pop crooner Bobby Darin (1936–1973) to Phish to the Jamaican ska band The Skatalites. The rapper Redman (b. 1970) samples "Caravan" in "Da Goodness." Search out these or other recordings and compare and contrast them to the original.
- Investigate the following site, which is sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution: http://americanhistory.si.edu/documentsgallery/exhibitions/ellington_strayhorn_4.html

Western Art Music: William Grant Still (1895–1978)

Known as the "Dean" of African American composers, William Grant Still successfully

navigated his way through the socially conservative and, at the time, almost exclusively white realm of classical music. He was the first African American to conduct a white



Composer William Grant Still, 1949.

American orchestra; he was also the first African American composer to have a symphony performed by one. Early in his career, Still worked as an arranger for jazz orchestras and Broadway shows. He went on to compose eight operas, along with other classical works.

His most acclaimed composition is the “Afro-American” Symphony. Although written for a symphony orchestra—a medium of European heritage—Still sought a distinctly African American voice. He stated that his goal was to compose ethnic music that did not show a Caucasian influence. In his “Afro-American” Symphony, Still wanted to show that the blues, though “often considered a lowly expression, could be elevated to the highest musical level.” Accordingly, he opened the symphony with a 12-bar-blues theme. The second theme has the quality of an African American spiritual, a genre that Still considered more Caucasian, less authentically African, than the blues.

MUSICAL TERMS

SONATA FORM

Sonata form, an instrumental form that developed in Europe in the eighteenth century, provided a grid upon which composers could lay out their musical ideas for easy understanding. It consists of three main sections:

- **Exposition**—where the composer introduces the main musical themes
- **Development**—where the main themes are developed
- **Recapitulation**—where the original ideas return

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LISTENING GUIDE



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“AFRO-AMERICAN” SYMPHONY (1930)

by William Grant Still

Sonata Form

0:00 Introduction: melody played by English horn.

Exposition

0:22 Theme 1 (blues) begins and is played by a sultry muted trumpet.

0:54 Theme 1 repeats 12 bars later, this time with a clarinet taking the lead. Notice how the other instruments in the orchestra seem to answer.

(Continued)

LISTENING GUIDE (*Continued*)

1:25	The blues form evaporates. Still chops up and embellishes his thematic material. At 1:33 the full orchestra has one last go at thematic material before easing into theme 2.
2:05	Theme 2. For this inward-looking theme (an emotional quality typical of second themes) he borrows from the style of the spiritual. The music then proceeds through a series of transformations in style and attitude. Some is inward looking, and some is extremely jazzy and extroverted.
Development	
3:23	Recasting of ideas from theme 2.
Recapitulation (Notice that the thematic order is reversed.)	
4:28	Theme 2.
5:05	A jazzy version of theme 1. Listen to the conversation between the muted trumpets and the riffing woodwinds. It consists of 12 bars.
5:36	Coda. Expansion of theme 1 ideas.

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

- Still wanted to compose an orchestral score free of Caucasian influence. Is this possible?
- Why do you think Still wanted to elevate the blues “to the highest musical level”? What do you think he meant by that idea? Do you think he succeeded?
- Who was Still’s audience? What was he trying to say to them?
- In what ways might the blues be more African than a spiritual? (Consider both musical and social possibilities.)
- In the symphony’s third movement, Still adds a banjo to the orchestration. Why?

MUSICAL THEMES

HARLEM RENAISSANCE

The Harlem Renaissance sought to give expression to the Afro-American experience. Important figures in the movement included sociologist W. E. B. DuBois (1868–1963), nationalist Marcus Garvey (1887–1940), philosopher Alain Leroy Locke (1885–1954), writer Langston Hughes (1902–1967), folklorist Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960), composers Duke Ellington and William Grant Still, and many others. The movement, which coincided with the Great Migration of African American families from the South in search of work in the urban North, is generally dated from 1919 until the mid-1930s.

West to East: Return to West Africa

We have seen that the roots of African American blues and jazz are to be found in the ancient musical and social cultures of West Africa. It is important to realize, however, that

connections across the African diaspora flow in multiple directions. In the 1960s, for example, soul singer James Brown (1933–2006) achieved superstar status in West Africa. His music served as a model for Nigerian musician/activist and afrobeat creator Fela Anikulapo Kuti (1938–1997) (see chapter 10: Music