



## Chicago's Musical Mavens

Read about two influential composers  
who helped each other succeed

**Florence Price** was a pianist, composer, and educator who holds the distinction of being the first Black female composer to have a work performed by a major American orchestra. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1877, Price began her musical studies at the age of four with her mother, before being accepted into the prestigious New England Conservatory at the age of 16. She graduated in 1906 and soon became the head of the music department at Clark Atlanta University. As conditions in the South became increasingly unsafe for Black Americans, Price and her family moved in 1927 to Chicago, where she continued to compose and teach piano – including a talented young student named Margaret Bonds.

**Margaret Bonds** was born in Chicago in 1913. A gifted pianist and songwriter, she studied first with her mother and then with Florence Price before being admitted to Northwestern University in 1929. Despite not being allowed to live on campus or to use university facilities such as the library due to her race, Bonds graduated with a Master's degree in music in 1934, at the age of 21 – one year after becoming the first Black musician to perform as a soloist with a major American orchestra.



**Price and Bonds** made history on June 15, 1933, when the Chicago Symphony Orchestra featured them in a concert led by Music Director Frederick Stock. The performance marked the world premiere of Price's Symphony in E minor and the solo debut of Bonds, who performed Carpenter's Concertino for Piano and Orchestra.

The two trailblazing musicians continued to collaborate both professionally and personally, with Bonds performing Price's piano concerto in 1934, and the two living together for a time following Price's divorce. Their relationship brought them into a shared creative circle of prominent Black artists of the time, including poet Langston Hughes and opera singer Marian Anderson. Certainly, they provided valuable support to each other in a time when Black female composers were not often given opportunities to succeed.

**Learn more about Florence Price and Margaret Bond's friendship and collaboration through Songs of America, Afrocentric Voices in Classical Music, and the International Florence Price Festival!**



PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PSO SCHOOLTIME LEARNING RESOURCES 2023-2024

THE COURAGE TO STAND

# Chicago's Musical Mavens

*Creative Writing Activity*

Learn more about Florence Price and Margaret Bonds. What did each of them contribute to the world of music? How did they collaborate? What obstacles did they face? Use the prompts below to record what you learn and to imagine their communication with each other.

- Facts about Florence Price:
- Facts about Margaret Bonds:
- What was going on in the time period that they lived and worked?
- How did they collaborate? Who else was part of their creative lives?
- Using the page below, write a letter from one musician to the other. Imagine what they would have talked about based on what you learned:



PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

PSO SCHOOLTIME LEARNING RESOURCES 2023-2024

