

# TuneUp!

Saturday, February 3, 2018

## Welcome to the Young People's Concerts!™

Poetry, novels, painting, drama, music, fashion—they all blossomed and converged uptown in Harlem on the tide of the Great Migration. It was the Jazz Age and African American music flourished—not just jazz, but also symphonic music. William Grant Still started out as an arranger for bluesman W.C. Handy; by the 1930s he was composing symphonies and conducting major orchestras. By then, Duke Ellington was establishing himself as a pianist and band leader; his creativity would eventually blossom in major orchestral works, too. Still's *Lenox Avenue* and Ellington's *Harlem* offer snapshots of one community: its diversity, history, and astounding contributions to American music. Discover a true New York story, an African American lineage of music that continues to reverberate today.

## Inspirations and Tributes



### THE PROGRAM

**STILL** Selections from *Lenox Avenue*

**TRADITIONAL** “My Lord, What a Mornin’” (arr. H. Burleigh)

#### VERY YOUNG COMPOSERS

**CAMRYN COWAN** *Harlem Shake* (with Perceaz Cordero, dancer)

**MICHAEL PINEDA** *Just Out of Reach*

**ELLINGTON** Selections from *Harlem* (arr. L. Henderson / M. Peress)

**JOSHUA GERSEN** Conductor

**BROOKLYN YOUTH CHORUS**

**DIANNE BERKUN MENAKER** Director

**KRISTEN ALYSON BROWNE** Actor

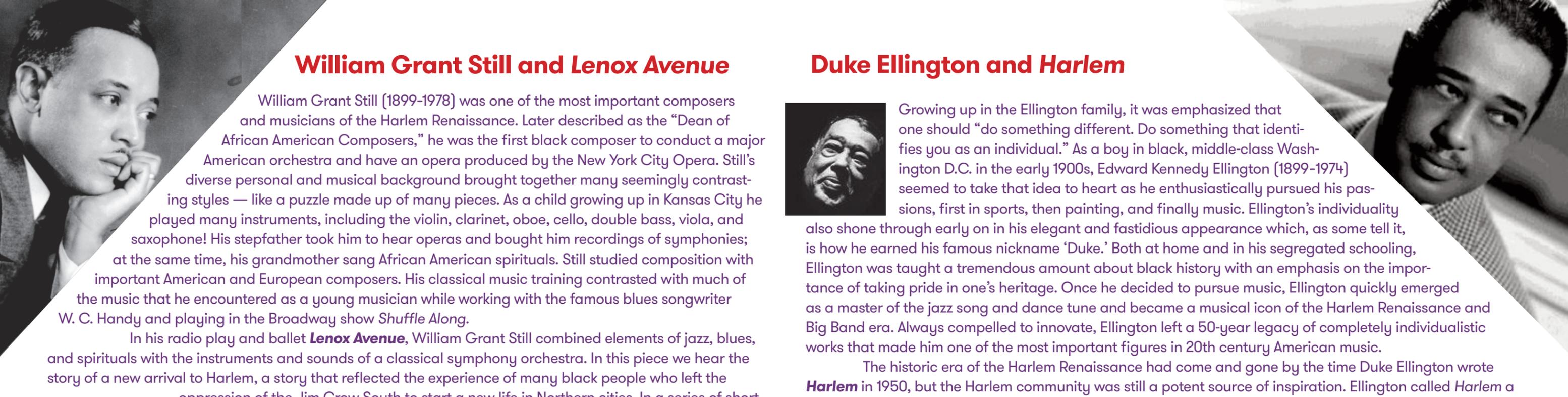
**TERRANCE MCKNIGHT** Narrator / Host

**NOAH HIMMELSTEIN** Writer / Director



**CAN YOU IDENTIFY EVERYTHING IN AND AROUND ELLINGTON'S STUDIO?**

Look on the back page to see whether you're right.

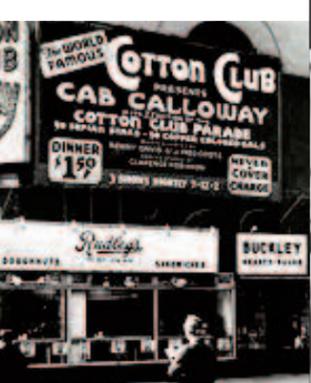


## William Grant Still and Lenox Avenue

William Grant Still (1899-1978) was one of the most important composers and musicians of the Harlem Renaissance. Later described as the “Dean of African American Composers,” he was the first black composer to conduct a major American orchestra and have an opera produced by the New York City Opera. Still’s diverse personal and musical background brought together many seemingly contrasting styles — like a puzzle made up of many pieces. As a child growing up in Kansas City he played many instruments, including the violin, clarinet, oboe, cello, double bass, viola, and saxophone! His stepfather took him to hear operas and bought him recordings of symphonies; at the same time, his grandmother sang African American spirituals. Still studied composition with important American and European composers. His classical music training contrasted with much of the music that he encountered as a young musician while working with the famous blues songwriter W. C. Handy and playing in the Broadway show *Shuffle Along*.

In his radio play and ballet **Lenox Avenue**, William Grant Still combined elements of jazz, blues, and spirituals with the instruments and sounds of a classical symphony orchestra. In this piece we hear the story of a new arrival to Harlem, a story that reflected the experience of many black people who left the oppression of the Jim Crow South to start a new life in Northern cities. In a series of short musical scenes, Still captures the diversity and energy of life in the Harlem community. For William Grant Still, the separation between various musical styles seemed artificial:

“For me there is no White music or Black music, there is only music by individual men that is important if it attempts to dignify all men, not just a particular race.”



## Camryn Cowan (age 10) Harlem Shake



Born in New York City, Camryn Cowan is a fifth grade student at P.S. 11 in Brooklyn. She began studying the violin at the Clinton Hill Music School when she was seven years old and also studies piano at the Nubian Conservatory of Music. Camryn loves many genres of music, including classical, hip-hop, gospel, K-pop from South Korea, and soca, a Caribbean genre that originated in Trinidad and Tobago. She also enjoys experimenting with sounds and creating music on her iPad using GarageBand. The name of her work, **Harlem Shake**, plays off a popular dance from a few years ago. Camryn says:

I aimed to infuse sounds of early 1920s jazz with the contemporary Hot Jazz sound that I heard over the summer while visiting New Orleans. I wanted the music to be catchy, upbeat, and to give off positive energy. I drew my inspiration from Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and The Preservation Hall Jazz Band. If you listen closely you will hear a round (perpetual canon) where the same melody is overlapped but begins at slightly different times. You will also hear an improvised solo by the alto saxophone that will make you want to get up and shake!

## Duke Ellington and Harlem



Growing up in the Ellington family, it was emphasized that one should “do something different. Do something that identifies you as an individual.” As a boy in black, middle-class Washington D.C. in the early 1900s, Edward Kennedy Ellington (1899-1974) seemed to take that idea to heart as he enthusiastically pursued his passions, first in sports, then painting, and finally music. Ellington’s individuality also shone through early on in his elegant and fastidious appearance which, as some tell it, is how he earned his famous nickname ‘Duke.’ Both at home and in his segregated schooling, Ellington was taught a tremendous amount about black history with an emphasis on the importance of taking pride in one’s heritage. Once he decided to pursue music, Ellington quickly emerged as a master of the jazz song and dance tune and became a musical icon of the Harlem Renaissance and Big Band era. Always compelled to innovate, Ellington left a 50-year legacy of completely individualistic works that made him one of the most important figures in 20th century American music.

The historic era of the Harlem Renaissance had come and gone by the time Duke Ellington wrote **Harlem** in 1950, but the Harlem community was still a potent source of inspiration. Ellington called *Harlem* a “tone parallel” — a parallel, in music, to the history of black Americans. As the music travels through the neighborhood, Ellington conveys not only scenes and characters, but also focuses on the emotions, ideas, and struggles that were at the heart of life in Harlem in the 1950s. Ellington described,

“We would like now to take you on a tour of this place called Harlem. It has always had more churches than cabarets. It is Sunday morning. We are strolling from 110th Street up Seventh Avenue, heading north through the Spanish and West Indian neighborhood toward the 125th Street business area. Everybody is nicely dressed, and on their way to or from church. Everybody is in a friendly mood. Greetings are polite and pleasant... You may hear a parade go by, or a funeral or you may recognize the passage of those who are making Civil Rights demands.”



## Michael Pineda (age 12) Just Out of Reach



Michael Pineda, a seventh grader at Trevor Day School, has been studying music since he was three years old. He has experience playing the clarinet, saxophone, and piano, and he started improvising songs on his keyboard at the age of seven. Michael first encountered the Very Young Composers program at P.S. 24, where he wrote his first piece of music. He continues to write music and be a part of Very Young Composers; he was recognized in the Philharmonic’s New World Initiative program in the 2016-17 season. He has also performed at the Consulate General of the Czech Republic and has had one of his compositions played at Carnegie Hall. Of **Just Out of Reach**, Michael says: Instead of composing a song based on a story or title, I compose from ideas I get and give it a title when I finish. The audience should listen for the melody.

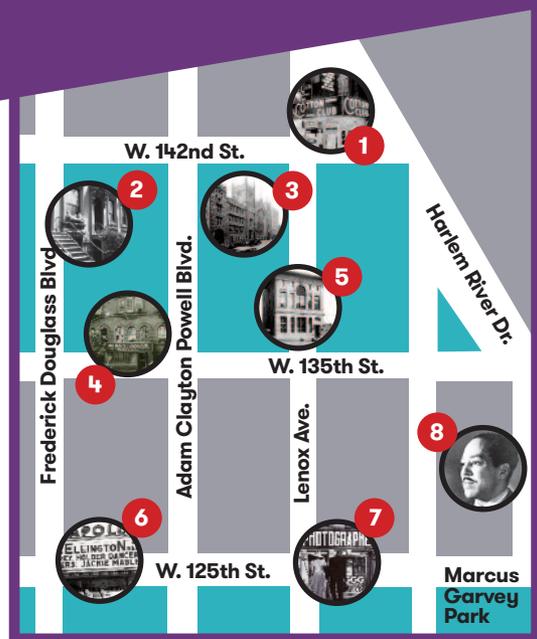
## What's in and around Ellington's Studio?

- 1) Photo of Lenox Avenue in the 1950s.
- 2) Photo of Duke Ellington and his band performing at the Cotton Club.
- 3) Portrait of William Grant Still.
- 4) Duke's top hat, cufflinks, and pocket watch: he was always impeccably dressed!
- 5) Presidential Medal of Freedom, awarded by Richard Nixon on Duke Ellington's 70th birthday and Duke's first 3 Grammys, presented at the 2nd Annual Grammy Awards in 1959.

## HARLEM RENAISSANCE MAP

Get to know a few landmarks from 1930s Harlem!

1. **The Cotton Club** (142nd St. and Lenox Ave.) One of Harlem's most famous nightclubs, the Cotton Club was a whites-only venue. Blacks were not allowed inside except to work, but many of the most famous black musicians rose to prominence here, including Duke Ellington.
2. **Strivers Row** (138th and 139th sts.) Lining two blocks, these townhouses were originally built in the 1890s for wealthy white clientele and weren't permitted to be sold to blacks until 1920. Since then, many of Harlem's most successful people have lived here.
3. **Abyssinian Baptist Church** (130 W. 138th St.) Founded in 1808 by a group of black parishioners who left the racially segregated First Baptist Church of New York, the Abyssinian Baptist Church is famous for its social activism, community outreach, and ministers.
4. **National Urban League** (202 W. 136th St.) One of the first national civil rights organizations, the National Urban League advocated for black migrants and organized black workers in unions across the country.
5. **135th Street Branch Library / Schomburg Center** (135th St. and Lenox Ave.) In 1925 the library opened a special collection dedicated to black literature and art. It rose to international acclaim when black scholar Arturo Schomburg donated his personal collection of more 10,000 items.
6. **The Apollo Theater** (125th St. and 8th Ave.) A music hall noted for its black performers, the Apollo first allowed black patrons in 1934 — the same year it began its famous Amateur Night contests. Many stars were "born" there, including Ella Fitzgerald.
7. **James Van Der Zee Portrait Studio** (322 Lenox Ave.) James Van Der Zee was a photographer who created thousands of portraits of the residents of Harlem in his studio in the 1920s and '30s.
8. **Home of Langston Hughes** (20 E. 127th St.) Langston Hughes was the unofficial "poet laureate" of the Harlem Renaissance and an inspiration to generations of writers and artists.



## About the Artists



**Joshua Gersen**, New York Philharmonic Assistant Conductor since September 2015, made his acclaimed Philharmonic subscription debut on hours' notice in February 2017. A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, he has been music director of the New York Youth Symphony, assistant conductor to artistic director Michael Tilson Thomas at the New World Symphony, and principal conductor of the Ojai Music Festival. Mr. Gersen has conducted the San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, and Jacksonville symphony orchestras.



The Grammy Award-winning **Brooklyn Youth Chorus**, named WQXR's 2016-17 artist-in-residence, is a collective of young singers and vocal ensembles reimagining choral music performance through artistic innovation, collaboration, and versatile repertoire. The chorus's multilevel training program draws students from across New York City's five boroughs and combines intensive voice and musicianship study with exceptional performance experiences. The chorus has appeared with the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, London and Atlanta Symphony Orchestras, and the Mariinsky Orchestra as well as recording artists including Barbra Streisand, Arcade Fire, Elton John, Grizzly Bear, and John Legend. Founded in 1992 by artistic director **Dianne Berkun Menaker**, Brooklyn Youth Chorus serves more than 600 students in its core afterschool and public school outreach programs.



**Kristen Alyson Browne** is a New York City based TV, film, and theater actress, singer, model and dancer. Some of her 2017 credits include Kelly Hughes in ABC's *Quantico*, Irina in Crash Theater Company's *TaRaRaBOOM: A Three Sister's MishMash*, and two recent commercials. She received a bachelor's degree in psychology and classical vocal performance from Emory University and a master's degree in acting from the Institute for Advanced Theater Training at Harvard University.



**Terrance McKnight** is the weekday evening host for WQXR 105.9 FM, New York's only all-classical music station. He is also the host, writer, and producer of the station's audio documentaries on Langston Hughes, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Florence Beatrice Price, among others. Mr. McKnight serves as the artistic director and host of The Dream Unfinished Orchestra, an activist orchestra that supports New York City-based civil rights and community organizations through concerts and presentations.



**Noah Himmelstein** is a Manhattan-based theater and opera director. He staged the premiere of Andrew Lipka's theatrical oratorio *I Am Harvey Milk* at San Francisco's Nourse Theatre, which was premiered on the same day that the Supreme Court declared the Defense of Marriage Act and California's Proposition 8 unconstitutional. Mr. Himmelstein has served as a teaching and guest artist and is associate artistic director of Everyman Theatre, producing classic and contemporary work that is affordable and accessible to all audiences.

## What's Coming Up?

**The Riddle of Shostakovich**  
Saturday, May 19, 2018

Support for Young People's Concerts is provided by **The Theodore H. Barth Foundation**.  
TuneUp! is made possible by an endowment in the name of **Lilian Butler Davey**.