

NEGRO'S CONTRIBUTION TO MUSICAL ART

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Everyone knows that Negroes have given to America much of her most typical and beautiful folk music through the spirituals and plantation songs that have grown out of the life of the race. But what musical art owes to the modern Negro composer is not so generally recognized. There is today a wealth of music both sacred and secular which has come from the pens of Negro composers. Some of it is based upon the spirituals, and some of it is not racial in character. Such Negro composers as Harry T. Burleigh, S. Coleridge-Taylor, Will Marion Cook, R. Nathaniel Dett, Carl R. Dixon, J. Rosamond Johnson, and Clarence Cameron White have during the past fifteen years written songs of rare melody and originality; songs that will live.

Of late there has been a steady increase in the appreciation of musical compositions by Negroes both among white and colored groups. Church choirs have given over services to sacred compositions by Negro composers. Many women's clubs have devoted time at their sessions to the performance of religious compositions by Negro composers, especially the simpler choral works. Colored groups operating locally under Community Service have presented special programs of Negro music, combining the spirituals with songs by modern Negro composers. In New Haven, Connecticut, a festival of Negro music presented by a Negro community

chorus and in Augusta, Georgia, a musical program made up largely of compositions by Negroes brought fresh musical knowledge and appreciation.

The Bureau of Community Music of Community Service, 315 Fourth Avenue, New York City, is endeavoring to foster this growing interest and to acquaint more music groups, both white and colored, with the possibilities offered by compositions by modern Negro composers. A bulletin, "Music Composed by Negroes," has been prepared by this Bureau and is sent out at the nominal charge of ten cents. It lists the compositions of seven of the foremost Negro composers, telling for what combinations of voices and instruments they are arranged and where they may be secured. examples of well-balanced programs of Negro music which already have been presented are given to help groups desiring to take up the study and performance of Negro spirituals the bulletin mentions the best existing collections of this type of music.

Community Service has made in this bulletin the first complete and satisfactory compendium of music by Negro composers. It will prove enlightening not only to Americans in general, who may be unacquainted with the treasures that are contained in the storehouse of Negro music, but to colored groups which may not be familiar with all of the music that their race has produced.