

Dr. Sarah Masterson is currently Associate Professor of Piano and Music Theory at Newberry College in Newberry, SC. At Newberry, she serves as the Coordinator of Music Theory, Director of Department of Music Social Media, and the founding Artistic Director of the W. Darr Wise Piano Competition.



in the Winter 2022 edition of the *Journal of the IAWM*, and her book *Snapshots of Forgotten Adventures: Rediscovering the Piano Music of Philippa Schuyler* was released in May 2024.

www.sarahmastersonpianist.com

After stumbling across a brief mention of Philippa Schuyler, Dr. Masterson embarked on a quest spanning the past several years to research and reconstruct Schuyler's piano music. She has presented Schuyler's music at venues including the Women Composers Festival of Hartford, Music by Women International Festival, College Music Society National Conference, and Women at the Piano International Conference. Her world premiere recording of Schuyler's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* was released in April 2022 on Centaur Records and received Third Prize in the 2023 Ernst Bacon Memorial Award for the Performance of American Music. Her article "Lawrence in America: Philippa Duke Schuyler's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*" appeared

Travelogue

Philippa Schuyler's Music for Piano
Sarah Masterson, piano



CRG 4102

1	Voodoo Festival (by 1958)	2:34
2	Damballa (by 1958)	1:47
3	Patagonian Triste (by 1958)	1:51
4	Wanchai Road (by 1958, rev. 1960)	0:56
5	The King of France (by 1960)	1:38
African Suite (by 1960) (5:35)		
6	I Sanga	2:05
7	II Tweyanze	0:43
8	III Fumitta Embogo	2:42
9	Carnival in Languedoc (by 1961)	15:31
White Nile Suite (premiered 1964) (29:18)		
10	I Legend of the Mahdi	7:00
11	II Alexandria	3:59
12	III Port Said	5:31
13	IV Fall of Babylon	12:39
14	African Rhapsody (premiered 1964)	6:26
15	Uganda Martyrs (1964)	5:53
16	Untitled (ca. 1965-1966)	7:50

Total Time: 79:41

Recorded January 15, 2024 at Shandon Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina. Produced by Jaye Ingram and Sarah Masterson. Engineered by Jaye Ingram. Cover photo by Carl Van Vechten, provided by The Beinecke Library Yale University and used with the permission of ©Van Vechten Trust. This project is funded in part by the South Carolina Arts Commission which receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts, and also by a generous award from the John and Susan Bennett Memorial Arts Fund of The Coastal Community Foundation of South Carolina. It is also partially funded by Newberry College.

©© 2024 Centaur Records, Inc.

www.centaurrecords.com

PHILIPPA SCHUYLER'S MUSIC FOR PIANO



SARAH MASTERSON, PIANO

TRAVELOGUE

Travelogue: Philippa Schuyler's Music for Piano

Pianist and composer Philippa Schuyler (1931-1967) was often called the most well-traveled young person of her day, eventually performing in nearly eighty countries around the world. Along the way, she took note of everything she experienced, resulting in both musical compositions and a career in freelance journalism. From her early folk music arrangements to her mature African and Arabic inspired compositions, Schuyler's music forms a travelogue, documenting and reflecting on the places she visited, the people she met, and the cultures she experienced.

As a child prodigy, Schuyler spent her childhood working and studying under her mother's constant supervision. At nineteen, she embarked on her first solo concert tour as an independent adult, beginning a career of nearly continuous travel. Like Schuyler, we begin in Haiti, where her tour commenced with a performance at President Magloire's 1950 inauguration. Schuyler's surviving Haitian compositions, *Voodoo Festival* and *Damballa*, arrange traditional Haitian Vodou themes given to her on that trip.

From Haiti, we travel to Chile (*Patagonian Triste*); China (*Wanchai Road*); and France (*The King of France*). Like *Voodoo Festival* and *Damballa*, the first three of these arrangements were completed by 1958, when they received their first documented performances. By 1960, Schuyler finished *The King of France* and *The Poet's Love*, each one ostensibly based on a fifteenth-century French chanson.

The continent of Africa fascinated Schuyler, and by 1960, she had visited at least twenty-one African countries, studying local music traditions along the way. Her first composition based on African melodies was *African Suite*. Its first movement, *Sanga*, arranges an Ethiopian melody, possibly a shepherd's flute song. The second and third movements set melodies from Joseph Kyagambiddwa's 1955 book *African Music from the Source of the Nile*. Schuyler met Kyagambiddwa in Uganda during a 1958 tour, where he gave her a copy of his book and arranged for her to hear local music performances. He translated *Tweyanze* as "Thank You Song" and *Fumitta Embogo* as "Spear the Buffalo."

Sometime before 1961, Schuyler composed a much longer work based on French melodies. More complex than her earlier arrangements, *Carnival in Languedoc* merges Schuyler's interests in folk music and program music by including authentic folk themes and a detailed plot. The melodramatic story begins at a seventeenth-century Carnival festival in Languedoc, France, as the main character, Janeto, embarks on a doomed affair with Pierre. After Pierre dies in a duel with Janeto's husband, things take a turn toward the supernatural with witches, ghosts, vampires, and an implausibly happy ending, including the resurrection of Janeto's lover. Along the way, Schuyler incorporates variations on three seventeenth-century French folk songs that begin simply and grow increasingly virtuosic, with chorales, counterpoint, a waltz, and other settings.

Because of Schuyler's early death, *White Nile Suite* (premiered 1964) remains one of her longest and most mature compositions. Each of the suite's four movements depicts a different city on the banks of the Nile River – Omdurman, Alexandria, Port Said, and Babylon. Although Schuyler later created an alternate version of the suite, her original movements are included here.

Legend of the Mahdi is based on Omdurman's role in the nineteenth-century Mahdist State. After declaring himself the Mahdi, or messiah, Muhammed Ahmad bin Abdullah of Sudan led a rebellion against Egypt and, by extension, Britain, which controlled Sudan at the time. Following a long siege, his forces defeated the British to take Khartoum in 1885 and officially established the Mahdist State, with Omdurman as its capital.

For *Alexandria*, Schuyler focused on the Egyptian city's early history, claiming in her lectures and program notes that the movement's main theme was derived from an ancient Macedonian hymn to Apollo. While few authentic ancient Greek musical works survive today, that description matches the First and Second Delphic Hymns. Of the two, Schuyler's melody most resembles the second section of the First Delphic Hymn.

The suite's third movement, *Port Said*, is named for what Schuyler called "the world's most corrupt and exciting city," depicted "on a hot night." One of the newer cities featured in *White Nile Suite*, Port Said

was established in 1859 during the construction of the Suez Canal. Imitating the style of Arabic music, Schuyler uses extensive *rubato* and constantly shifting ornamentation throughout most of the movement, with a lively, syncopated contrasting middle section.

Schuyler based the final movement of *White Nile Suite* on the Egyptian fortress of Babylon, located near modern-day Cairo. Specifically, the *Fall of Babylon*'s title was inspired by the fortress's defeat during the Arab conquest of Egypt in 641 AD, a pivotal event in Egyptian history. The movement is highly dissonant, with Schuyler incorporating added minor seconds into nearly every melody, probably attempting to approximate the quarter tone tuning of traditional Arabic music.

African Rhapsody premiered on the same concert as *White Nile Suite*, under the alternate title *Chisamharu the Nogomo*. Although its original title referenced the story of Chisamharu Negomo Mupunzagutu, ruler of the Mutapa Empire from 1560 to 1589, *African Rhapsody* does not include a detailed plot. Instead, Schuyler links together several African dances from Uganda, the Congo, and parts of West Africa. Schuyler changed the title to the more generic *African Rhapsody* after being invited to compose a piece in honor of Dr. Albert Schweitzer's ninetieth birthday, with subsequent programs citing Dr. Schweitzer as the work's inspiration.

Schuyler's *Uganda Martyrs* (1964) is purportedly a transcription of Joseph Kyagambiddwa's *Uganda*

Martyrs African Oratorio (1964), the first work in a traditional African style to be performed in St. Peter's Basilica, during the 1964 canonization of the Uganda Martyrs. While a true transcription may have existed at some point, *Uganda Martyrs* transforms Kyagambiddwa's oratorio completely. Melodies occur out of order, and many of its twenty-two movements are omitted entirely. Moreover, melodies that do appear are fragmented, altered rhythmically, and manipulated in various ways. Schuyler also diverges significantly from the traditional Kiganda musical style of single-line or call and response settings, with chorales, counterpoint, and layering of motives. The resulting composition bears little surface-level resemblance to Kyagambiddwa's oratorio, although Schuyler honored Kyagambiddwa in every recital program.

Our journey concludes with a recently discovered untitled work, found within a notebook containing copies of the piano parts for Schuyler's piano concert *Nile Fantasy*. Based on its location in the notebook, *Untitled* is Schuyler's final surviving composition, written in late 1965 or 1966. *Untitled*'s handwritten manuscript includes a list of named musical themes, spelled with Schuyler's own musical alphabet, and their topics relate to African decolonization. These themes are interspersed with motives from Kyagambiddwa's oratorio focusing on martyrdom. Musically and narratively, this work appears to be the first movement of an intended suite, with only some of Schuyler's listed themes appearing. It remains unclear what specific plot Schuyler intended for the

full suite, but this movement seems to be mourning those who died in the fight for a free Africa. Without the completed suite, *Untitled* ends quite ambiguously, with a monophonic motive repeating three times before fading away. Schuyler's typically overblown, triumphant ending is entirely absent, lending credence to the theory she intended more to follow, paralleling the unfinished nature of Schuyler's own life.

Not long after writing *Untitled*, Schuyler traveled to Vietnam, initially performing at the Saigon Conservatory, but then reporting on the war. On a second trip in 1967, she spent most of her time in the city of Hue, which was under nearly continuous shelling and surrounded by mines. Disguising herself as Vietnamese, she hid with locals to avoid mandatory evacuation, unwilling to leave "at the very moment that Hue [was] becoming interesting." She became involved in evacuating women, children, and clergy to safer areas, using a combination of her charm and sheer force of will to get them on military flights and, by her count, evacuating over seventy people. It was on one of those flights that she died at age thirty-five, when her helicopter crashed yards from shore, killing one serviceman, Schuyler, and the child sitting in her lap, thus cutting short a fascinating musical life.

Sarah Masterson, partially adapted from *Snapshots of Forgotten Adventures: Rediscovering the Piano Music of Philippa Schuyler*