



MARIAN ANDERSON HALL

HONORING AN ARTISTIC AND CIVIL RIGHTS ICON

FACT SHEET

- Marian Anderson first sang at the Academy of Music (the original home of The Philadelphia Orchestra) in 1918 at the age of 21. She was presented in concert there with the New York Clef Club Syncopated Orchestra by G. Grant Williams, a concert promoter and editor of the *Philadelphia Tribune*.
- Marian Anderson made her Philadelphia Orchestra debut on April 12, 1937, on an RCA “Magic Key” radio broadcast, singing “O don fatale,” from Verdi’s *Don Carlo*, conducted by then-Music Director Eugene Ormandy. The broadcast was also a sendoff for the Orchestra prior to a five-week transcontinental tour.
- Over 20 years, between 1937 and 1957, Marian Anderson sang 12 times with The Philadelphia Orchestra. Her performances with the Orchestra reflect various sides of her repertory: arias from operas and oratorios, German songs, and spirituals. After her retirement from singing in 1965, she joined the Orchestra to narrate Aaron Copland’s *A Lincoln Portrait* several times at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center in Saratoga Springs, NY, and at the Robin Hood Dell in Philadelphia, the last time in 1976, when she was nearly 80, with the composer conducting.
- Marian Anderson’s 1939 performance at the Lincoln Memorial is considered a formative moment in the nascent civil rights movement. A 10-year-old Martin Luther King, Jr., heard the performance. Twenty-four years later, Anderson sang from the Lincoln Memorial again as a part of the March on Washington.
- Florence Price, the first Black woman composer to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra, knew Marian Anderson well and arranged upwards of 50 art songs for her. The final piece Anderson sang at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939, “My Soul’s Been Anchored in the Lord,” was arranged by Price. This was the only piece arranged or composed by a woman on that program, and Anderson made sure this was made clear by including Price’s first and last names in the program.
- Former Philadelphia Orchestra Music Director Leopold Stokowski was one of the sponsors of the 1939 Lincoln Memorial performance, as was Senator Joseph F. Guffey of Pennsylvania.
- In 1939, Marian Anderson recorded Brahms’s Alto Rhapsody and four of his songs with The Philadelphia Orchestra and Eugene Ormandy for Victor Records. One of those songs, “Von ewiger Liebe,” was not issued at the time of the original release and only later appeared on the Orchestra’s 12-CD set, *The Philadelphia Orchestra: The Centennial Collection (Historic Broadcasts and Recordings from 1917-1998)*. A live recording of her narrating Copland’s *A Lincoln Portrait* from 1976 at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center with the composer conducting is also part of *The Centennial Collection*.
- Marian Anderson also recorded numerous arias from oratorios and two American songs in 1941 with what was billed as the Victor Symphony Orchestra. The ensemble was actually, in fact, The Philadelphia Orchestra, as confirmed by Charles O’Connell, conductor on the recordings and longtime recording executive, in his book, *The Other Side of the Record*.
- Marian Anderson became the first Black artist to sing a leading role at the Metropolitan Opera, in 1955. Philadelphia Orchestra Music and Artistic Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin currently also serves as music director of the Metropolitan Opera.



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