



University of North Texas  
College of Music

Lecture Recital | Tuesday, March 4, 2025 | 7:00pm  
St. Andrew Presbyterian Church of Denton

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**J. Christine Le, conductor**

A Spirit-Dawn Shall Come:  
The Revitalization of Florence Price's Cantata  
"Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight"

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*excerpts to be selected from the following*

- Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight (n.d.) ..... Florence B. Price  
Introduction and Overture: A Bronzed Lank Man (1887–1953)  
1. It is Portentous Text by Vachel Lindsay  
2. Until the Dawn Stars Burn Away  
3. He Cannot Sleep  
4. His Head Is Bowed  
5. He Cannot Rest until a Spirit-Dawn Shall Come  
6. Finale: Who Will Bring White Peace?

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*Program three hundred thirty-six of the 2024–2025 season  
Photography and videography are prohibited*

## Program Notes

In 2009, home renovators uncovered long-forgotten music in the abandoned summer residence of composer Florence Beatrice Smith Price (1887–1953). These renovators found multiple versions of a cantata titled "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight." Two manuscripts appeared to be complete: one for chorus and piano and another for chorus and orchestra. Price likely never saw this cantata—her largest choral work—rehearsed or performed during her lifetime. All original manuscripts of this work now reside in the Special Collections of the University of Arkansas Libraries.

The piano-vocal and choral orchestral versions of "Abraham" are incompatible: each movement contains several contrasting sections, particularly toward the end of each movement. Tonight's recital features excerpts from Price's orchestral and piano versions, focusing on comparing the endings of each movement. An ensemble of strings and organ serves as a reduced representation of Price's full orchestration.

The various versions of "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight" showcase the remarkable versatility of Price's compositional style. Conductors are encouraged to program, study, and discuss this cantata. By promoting further research into Florence Price's invaluable contributions to choral composition, more singers will gain access to her powerful and meaningful music.

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## Text

by Vachel Lindsay (1879–1931)

It is portentous, and a thing of state  
That here at midnight, in our little town  
A mourning figure walks, and will not rest,  
Near the old court-house pacing up and down.

Or by his homestead, or in shadowed yards  
He lingers where his children used to play,  
Or through the market, on the well-worn stones  
He stalks until the dawn-stars burn away.

A bronzed, lank man! His suit of ancient black,  
A famous high top-hat and plain worn shawl  
Make him the quaint great figure that men love,  
The prairie-lawyer, master of us all.

He cannot sleep upon his hillside now.  
He is among us:—as in times before!  
And we who toss and lie awake for long  
Breathe deep, and start to see him pass the door.

His head is bowed. He thinks on men and kings.  
Yea, when the sick world cries, how can he sleep?  
Too many peasants fight, they know not why,  
Too many homesteads in black terror weep.

The sins of all the war-lords burn his heart.  
He sees the dreadnaughts scouring every main.  
He carries on his shawl-wrapped shoulders now  
The bitterness, the folly and the pain.

He cannot rest until a spirit-dawn  
Shall come;—the shining hope of Europe free;  
The league of sober folk, the Workers' Earth,  
Bringing long peace to Cornland, Alp and Sea.

It breaks his heart that kings must murder still,  
That all his hours of travail here for men  
Seem yet in vain. And who will bring white peace  
That he may sleep upon his hill again?

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## Personnel

### Soprano

Ella Castro  
Elizabeth Harris  
Luo Xiaojing  
Melissa Roth Young

### Alto

Sam Kats  
Julianna LoBiondo  
Jade Wesley  
Maiya Williams

### Tenor

Dong Hyun Kang  
Robby Napoli  
Zihui Pang  
Alexis Mendoza-Sanchez

### Bass

Matt Carlson  
Eric Martinez  
PJ Mooney  
Evan Powers

### Violin

Peihuan Tang  
Michelle Martey

### Viola

Qianqian Fu  
Samuel Yi

### Cello

Maria Baylock

### Bass

Wyatt Gaugler

### Piano

Chiao-Ju Hung

### Organ

Lenora McCroskey