



Harry T. Burleigh: From the Spiritual to the Harlem Renaissance (Music in American Life)

Jean E. Snyder

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Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949) played a leading role in American music and culture in the twentieth century. Celebrated for his arrangements of spirituals, Burleigh was also the first African American composer to create a significant body of art song. An international roster of opera and recital singers performed his works and praised them as among the best of their time.

Jean E. Snyder traces Burleigh's life from his Pennsylvania childhood through his fifty-year tenure as soloist at St. George's Episcopal Church in Manhattan. As a composer, Burleigh's pioneering work preserved and transformed the African American spiritual; as a music editor, he facilitated the work of other black composers; as a role model, vocal coach, and mentor, he profoundly influenced American song; and in private life he was friends with Antonín Dvořák, Marian Anderson, Will Marion Cook, and other American luminaries. Snyder provides rich historical, social, and political contexts that explore Burleigh's professional and personal life within an era complicated by changes in race relations, class expectations, and musical tastes.

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