

Marian Anderson: A Musical Memoire

92Y's Musical Introduction Series third concert of the season engaged students in learning about Marian Anderson, one of the most celebrated singers of the 20th century. Marian Anderson was the first African American singer to perform in a leading role at the Metropolitan Opera and as an active participant in the civil rights movement.



From left to right: Jenny Lin (piano), Jessica Kight (Alice), Marliisa Hudson (Marian Anderson, singer), Greta Ogelsby (Marian Anderson, actress)

The concert showcased the unique range of Ms. Anderson's vocal ability and her mastery of the aria, lied, and spiritual song genres. The theatrical performance highlighted the music Marian Anderson sang throughout her lifetime focusing specifically on the eve of the 1963 March on Washington where Marian was programmed to sing the National Anthem.

92Y teaching artists prepared kindergarten to third grade students in thirty schools by introducing the students to the impact Marian's singing had on changing the nation as well as identifying each musical selection based upon its defining characteristics. By the end of the residency, students were able to recognize and define qualities of aria, lied, and spiritual song genres. 92Y's Kaufmann Concert Hall was filled with over 5,000 students who witnessed Marian's journey from segregation to her famous performance at the Lincoln Memorial. The artistic elements of theater and opera challenged young learners to listen attentively and applaud appropriately after each vocal selection by soprano, Marliisa

Hudson. Teachers commented on the success of students learning about Marian Anderson's challenges and achievements in life and her contribution to the musical fabric of our nation. Overall, the unit of study introduced students to a piece of US history and compelled them to see how one person, despite disabling obstacles, was able to change it.



Marian Anderson performing at the Lincoln Memorial on April 9, 1939, *University of Pennsylvania, Rare book and Manuscript Library*

"I thought the Marian Anderson dramatization did a wonderful job of blending history, drama, and a musical presentation."

- Carol Volow, 3rd grade teacher, PS 278

Marian Anderson: The Cast and Characters



Greta Ogelsby, *Marian Anderson* (actress): Acclaimed actress Greta Ogelsby joined 92Y from Minnesota where she recently starred in Tony Kushner's *Caroline or Change*. Ogelsby's incarnation of the character revealed the journey of Marian Anderson from a young woman struggling in Philadelphia, PA to her success at the March on Washington serving as a symbol in the struggle for equal rights and opportunities.

"If you have a purpose in which you can believe, there's no end to the amount of things you can accomplish." -Marian Anderson

Marlissa Hudson, *Marian Anderson* (singer): Versatile soprano, Marlissa Hudson, embodied the world-renowned contralto by performing a range of Marian's favorite songs. Selections included an *Casta Diva*, *Gretchen am Spinrade*, and *Sometimes I feel like a Motherless Child*. Marian was the first African American woman to perform at the Metropolitan Opera, despite being denied admittance into Philadelphia Music School because of the color of her skin.

"Her voice was a rich, vibrant contralto of intrinsic beauty."
-Alan Blyth, music critic



Jessica Kight, *Alice* (maid): Brooklyn actress, Jessica Kight, made her debut at 92Y presenting the maid, Alice, who attends to Marian's needs inside the Washington D.C. hotel where Marian is staying awaiting to sing for the March on Washington. It is through Alice that we discover who Marian is and how she became such an integral part of American history.

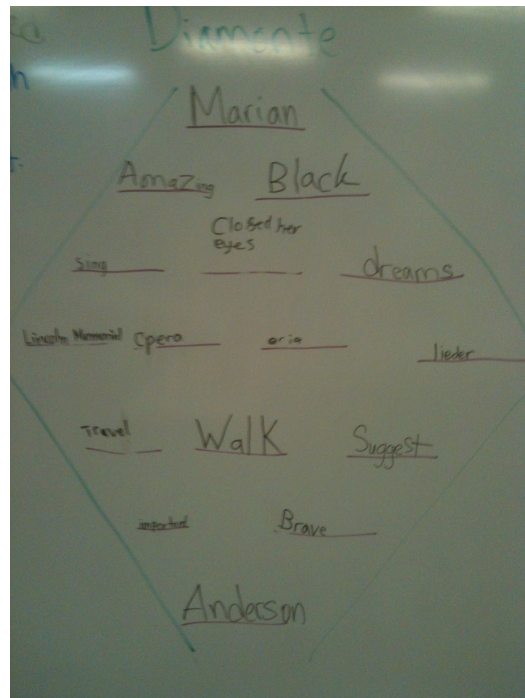
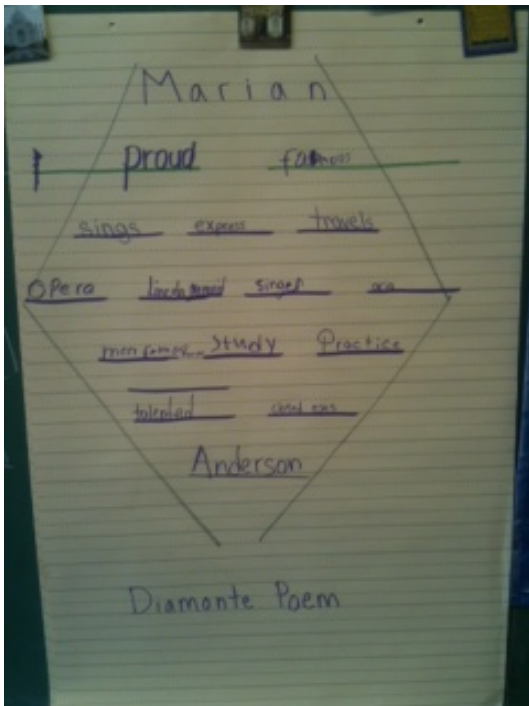
"You lose a lot of time, hating people." - Marian Anderson

In the Classroom: Diamante Poems

92Y's Educational Outreach Center teaching artists provided instruction by delving into the life and times of Marian Anderson as well as different musical genres. The Musical Introduction Series deepened student's understanding of social studies and literary forms. Their 92Y *My Music Journal* engaged students in creative and fun activities assessing the students' understanding of key concepts through an artistic lens.

One lesson focused on literacy by asking students to describe Marian Anderson in the form of a diamante poem (a poem that is in the shape of a diamond that contains seven lines that do not rhyme). The first and last lines are the shortest and the middle lines are longer, thus making the shape of a diamond.

These diamante poems were written by 3rd graders from PS 3:



We look forward to seeing everyone at the final concert of the season: Pharaoh's Daughter, May 21-22!