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UNIQUE BOOK PROFILES HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH MUSICIANS AND MUSIC TEACHERS

CHERRY HILL, NJ—Henrietta Fuller Robinson, aged 93, and Carolyn Cordelia Williams, aged 39, are celebrating a great achievement, the July 1997 release of the hardcover edition of *Dedicated to Music: The Legacy of African American Church Musicians and Music Teachers in Southern New Jersey, 1915-1990*. With this revised version of their November 1996 paperback, these co-authors reach a new plateau in their challenging, and exciting four year journey to honor and preserve a neglected part of African American history.

A well-documented biographical study, *Dedicated to Music* features Henrietta Fuller Robinson's delightful narrative, highlighting her extraordinary sixty year career in music, and an invaluable dictionary with profiles of thirty-two musicians, a tangible cross-section of the region's most accomplished artists. It also includes an enlightening historical overview as an introductory essay, "Composing The Community: Blacks Making and Teaching Music in Southern New Jersey," by noted historian Clement Alexander Price, Professor of History at the Newark, New Jersey campus of Rutgers University.

Ninety-three years old Henrietta Fuller Robinson, a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania native and long time southern New Jersey resident, worked as a music teacher, pianist, organist, choir director, vocalist, and talent promoter. She was first instilled with a great love of music by her mother, who enjoyed singing and playing favorite hymns and spirituals on the piano as entertainment for their family. Through childhood and into early adulthood, Robinson's musical talents were nurtured by various music teachers. The most prominent of her mentors was Marian Anderson, with whom she studied voice in the mid 1920's.

After a deciding to pursue music as a profession, Henrietta Fuller Robinson taught privately and worked in a variety of organizations, including these: the Federal Music Project of the Works Progress Administration, in Philadelphia during the 1930's; St. John's United Methodist Church in Berlin, New Jersey, from 1937 through the late 1950's; the West Atco Improvement League, in Atco, New Jersey, from the late 1930's through the 1960's; the Stevens Street Branch of the YWCA in Camden, New Jersey, between early 1960 and the late 1970's. Also an elementary school teacher in the New Jersey public schools, she self-published *Stories of*

New Jersey, a coloring book for children, *My Jerseyland*, a brief illustrated history of New Jersey, and a song lyric, *My Jerseyland, A Prayer For Our State*. While serving as president of the Marian Anderson Music Guild, Camden Branch of the National Association of Negro Musicians (NANM) in her eightieth decade, Robinson obtained a grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission (NJHC) and completed a manuscript, *The Forgotten Music Teacher*. This feat, inspired by her desire to bring greater recognition to the role of African American music teachers, was the impetus for *Dedicated to Music*.

Since leaving a career in research and clinical science, Carolyn Cordelia Williams has worked as a freelance writer, independent researcher, and non-profit organization manager. A native of Cherry Hill, New Jersey, she is the co-author of scientific papers, and the author of feature articles on African American and African Canadian history. For the past six years, researching nineteenth and twentieth century African American musicians in New Jersey and Pennsylvania has been her special focus, a very personal commitment. Her most important work-in-progress is a biography of Carl Rossini Diton (1886-1962), a Philadelphia musician who excelled as a pianist, organist, composer, vocalist, choral director, music critic, and was a charter member and fourth president of the NANM (founded in 1919 in Chicago, Illinois). A student of music herself, Williams's artistic credits include performances as a violoncellist and vocalist. Her auspicious entry into publishing commenced with her founding of Africana Homestead Legacy Publishers and the issuance of this title.

Giles R. Wright II, Director of the Afro-American History Program of the NJHC, gets credit for instigating the collaboration between Robinson and Williams. Impressed by Robinson's marvelous achievements and devotion to her profession, he thought it critical to document her life's work and the lives of other black musicians working in the southern New Jersey community. Since Williams was an associate (through their joint work for a non-profit organization) he was well aware of her ongoing music research and knew she was ideal to serve as Robinson's co-author. The NJHC Grant-in Aid Program, directed by Mary R. Murrin, provided three separate grants for the project in 1994, 1995, and 1996. The funds covered the research and editorial costs, consultants fees, and the publication expenses.

Since founding Africana Homestead Legacy Publishers in July 1996, Williams has made quick progress in structuring her company to enter the mainstream market. The most important element was obtaining a distributor and wholesaler for her titles this spring. *Dedicated to Music*, ISBN: 0-9653308-4-2, retails for \$24.95. Individuals may order copies at any bookstore or via mail order from the distributor BookMasters, Inc.: 1-800-247-6553 (7 days a week, 24 hours a day) or E-mail, order@bookmaster.com (pay by VISA, Mastercard, American Express, Discover), check or money order to P.O. Box 288 Ashland OH 44805. Those in the trade may order from either the distributor or Williams's wholesaler, Baker & Taylor Books. For more info call AHLP at (609) 531-4182.

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