

David Harris Flaherty Undergraduate Student Library Scholarship 2021 Recipient

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Award-winning Essay

As an oboe student in the School of Music, I frequently use the UVic library services for many of my music performance classes. In particular, the library is my main source of music scores that have not yet entered public domain, or are otherwise difficult to locate elsewhere. This is especially helpful for selecting works to study in my individual tuition (MUS 240) course, where I am required to choose at least four long works from a variety of eras and styles per year. In addition to studying these works in class, I am also expected to perform them either at the School of Music's Friday concerts, or for a panel of judges as part of my final playing exam at the end of the year. In the UVic library's music and media section, I am able to find not only standard repertoire from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras, but also contemporary compositions and works by diverse composers. This diverse selection of music scores at the library ensures I am able to select music that allows me to work on a variety of instrumental techniques, as well as find works by lesser-known composers that I am passionate about. For example, this past semester, the UVic library was the only place I was able to find the score to William Grant Still's *Incantation and Dance* (1941). Still was an African American composer from Arkansas who blended African American, jazz, and spiritual music idioms into a uniquely American sound. He also broke many racial barriers in art music, including being the first African American composer to have their work performed by a major American symphony orchestra. Although Still was a prominent figure in American music during the early to mid twentieth century, his work is largely unknown in the present day due to many of his compositions being lost. Furthermore, Still's surviving compositions are difficult to find outside of the music publisher's online store. Thus, much of Still's work, particularly for solo instruments or chamber ensembles, goes unperformed despite its musical integrity. As a musician who also identifies as a member of a visible minority, it is important for me to be able to study quality pieces by diverse composers such as Still. This is likewise an important consideration for many other young musicians in response to Black Lives Matter and other similar social justice movements. By studying and performing compositions like *Incantation and Dance*, musicians such as myself are able to help expand the definition of standard Western repertoire to include composers from underrepresented groups. In turn, this helps diversify the Western music canon and create more space for performers and composers who