

A Message of Inclusion, A History of Exclusion:
Racial Injustice at the Peabody Institute

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The Peabody Institute was a generous philanthropic gift from George Peabody to the city of Baltimore in the middle of the 19th century and was founded with ideals of being a center for arts education for the entire city. The Peabody Conservatory, however, remained segregated for nearly a century after its founding in 1857, despite Baltimore's large and growing African-American population. It boasted of an international student body from countries all over the world, but would not admit African-American students who lived just miles away. This raises important questions about the effect of The Peabody Institute's past racist policies on the music community in Baltimore, the environment at Peabody for the first generation of African-American students who enrolled, and what all of this means for Peabody going forward.

Founding of the Peabody Institute of Music

George Peabody was born in 1795 in South Danvers, Massachusetts,¹ growing up in a poor family with very little access to education. Despite this, he became a very successful businessman and, because of the lack of educational opportunities in his childhood, cared deeply about providing opportunities for children and young adults with little means. He established many funds and institutions for the public good, including the Peabody Education Fund, the George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, TN,² and the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University. Because of these establishments, Peabody is often called the "father of modern philanthropy." The Peabody Institute of the City of Baltimore was founded among these other institutions and was placed in the heart of Mount Vernon in Baltimore, neighboring the Washington Monument. The Institute comprised a lecture series, library, art gallery, and the Conservatory of Music, which is the department we think of most often today. In 1898, the

¹ Now Peabody, Massachusetts, named after George Peabody.

² Now the Peabody College of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University.

Conservatory was broken into two levels, the Preparatory Department and the Advanced Department. The Preparatory retains its name to this day, but the Advanced Department is now referred to as the Conservatory, and these two names were used interchangeably very early on. The Preparatory is the division of the school for amateur musicians and dancers, while the Conservatory is for emerging professionals pursuing a degree. For the purposes of this research, “Peabody” or “The Peabody Institute” will primarily refer to the combined Conservatory and Preparatory Departments.

The entire Institute was a center for arts enrichment and education for the community, and considering this, it was in some ways fitting that it was built under the shadow of the Washington Monument. Since its completion in 1829, Baltimore’s Washington Monument has been a place of gathering for the community; but it has also been a symbol of wealth and elitism. As Mary P. Ryan says in her article, *Democracy Rising: The Monuments of Baltimore, 1809-1842*, “Under the name Mount Vernon, the real estate around the Washington Monument became the first patch of Baltimore to become socially and economically homogeneous territory, a nearly exclusive, upper-class residential neighborhood.”³ It is crucial to understand that the Peabody Institute was founded before the Civil War in a state and city that was part of the Union in name only. Baltimore had a large slave trade industry, and although it also had one of the largest populations of free blacks at the time, the number of Confederate sympathizers and slave owners was significant. In addition to this, Peabody was founded in one of the most elite neighborhoods of the time, which continues to symbolize and embody whiteness and gentrification. Because of the Civil War, The Peabody Institute did not open its doors until 1866,

³ Mary P. Ryan, “Democracy Rising: The Monuments of Baltimore, 1809-1842,” *Journal of Urban History* 36, no. 2 (March 2010): 141.

nine years after George Peabody's founding letter. In this letter from 1857, George Peabody made it clear that he wished for The Peabody Institute to serve all of Baltimore, saying he had an "aversion to intolerance, bigotry, and party rancor"⁴ and stating clearly his wish "that it shall never lend its [h]and or influence to the propagation of opinions tending to create or encourage sectional jealousies in our happy country, or which may lead to the alienation of the people of one State or Section of the Union from those of another."⁵ Despite George Peabody's intention for The Peabody Institute to be an accessible and inclusive resource, whatever that may have meant to him, the environment in which it was founded set an expectation of exclusion of all but the white upper-middle class.

Local Musicians and Programs in the Early 20th Century

Fifty years after the Peabody Institute's founding in this environment, post-Civil War and Reconstruction, Baltimore was in the throes of Jim Crow and Peabody was no exception. Peabody's exclusion of African-American students in the early twentieth century, however, was no reflection on the quantity or quality of black classical musicians in Baltimore. The African-American classical music community was thriving, and just blocks away from Peabody black musicians performed, taught, and studied through organizations such as the Aeolian Conservatory, The Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts, and the Baltimore City Colored Orchestra and Chorus. There is no record of Peabody engaging with these organizations, and although some isolated programs initiated by Peabody engaged off campus with African-American music

⁴ Letter from George Peabody to the Board of Trustees of the Peabody Institute, 1857 February 12, George Peabody Collection, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 25. Available online at <http://cdm16613.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p16613coll2/id/1851/rec/3>.

⁵ Ibid., 26.

students and teachers, the classical music community remained completely segregated, and no black students could enroll at the Peabody campus.

“Colored Teachers’ Class”

During the 1924-1925 and 1925-1926 school years, Peabody faculty taught an off-campus music pedagogy class for African-American music teachers. This was likely organized by the Peabody Preparatory, the division of the school for amateur musicians, and correspondence and documents from the time refer to the class as the “Colored Teachers’ Class.” In the Spring of 1925, it was hosted at a branch of the YMCA, which was still segregated at the time, and Baltimore City School No. 112, located at Carey and School St.^{6,7} The following year it was hosted at The Diggs School of Music, located at 1124 Druid Hill Avenue and only a fifteen minute walk from Peabody.⁸ This is the earliest known effort by Peabody to engage with the African-American community. In an October 1925 letter to Maurice Diggs of the Diggs School of Music, a Preparatory administrator recommended that the course be free of charge, advising “that it would be better for your school not to charge the members [of the class] a fee, inasmuch as the Peabody is not making the school any charges—a fee for this course might give rise to a misunderstanding.”⁹ There is not much information about what was taught in this pedagogy

⁶ William Pinderhughes Elementary/Middle School now stands near this site.

⁷ “Colored Teachers’ Class” Roster 1924-1925, Folder 8 Corres. “Colored Teachers’ Class” 1924-1925, VII-1.A.2, Preparatory Correspondence 1917-1918, 1925-1926, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁸ “Colored Teachers’ Class” Roster 1925-1926, Folder 3 Corres. “Colored Teachers’ Class” 1925-1926, VII-1.A.2, Preparatory Correspondence 1917-1918, 1925-1926, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁹ Letter from Mary Evans to Maurice Diggs, 1925 October 8, Folder 4 Corres. L-Z, VII-1.A.2, Preparatory Correspondence 1917-1918, 1925-1926, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

course, or why it came to be in the first place, but there are many criticism cards¹⁰ for both piano and voice examinations. The cards offer feedback for the students' musical and technical skills, and while they occasionally mention the students' aptitude for teaching, the primary focus of these cards seems to be the students' own musical development. The cards mostly display cordiality between the instructors and the students, and an eagerness to learn from everyone who was enrolled. In a private record from the 1925-1926 class, however, one of the comments reads, "Typical old-time negro voice."¹¹ It's easy to imagine that this was only one of many similar comments made either privately or directly to the students, and while the class may have been a step in the right direction, it was only the first step of a long journey.

Baltimore Musicians

Just after this time, W. Llewellyn Wilson, a black cellist, conductor, music critic, and music educator, was transforming the African-American classical community in Baltimore. He began teaching at Douglass High School¹² in 1925,¹³ and during his time there he taught piano prodigy Ellis Larkins, soprano Anne Wiggins Brown, and most of Baltimore's other young African-American musicians. Wilson was determined throughout his life to provide the same opportunities for black musicians and concert-goers that their white neighbors had just a few blocks away. He did this in many ways, forming chamber groups with colleagues,¹⁴ starting

¹⁰ Criticism Cards, 1924-1926, Folder 3 Corres. "Colored Teachers' Class" 1925-1926, Folder 8 Corres. "Colored Teachers' Class 1924-1925, VII-1.A.2, Preparatory Correspondence 1917-1918, 1925-1926, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹¹ "Diggs School" Grades and Comments, 1925-26, Folder 3 Corres. "Colored Teachers' Class" 1925-1926, VII-1.A.2, Preparatory Correspondence 1917-1918, 1925-1926, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 1.

¹² Now Frederick Douglass High School.

¹³ Andrew Joseph Carl Fields, "William Llewellyn Wilson: A Biography," (M.A. Thesis, Morgan State University, 1990), 13.

¹⁴ Ibid., 38-40.

concert series that featured black musicians,¹⁵ and building excitement about concerts and educating the community through his *Afro-American* column, “Chords and Dischords.”^{16,17} In 1929, he led a student cast and orchestra at Douglass High School in a production of Wagner’s *The Flying Dutchman*, a feat even for professional performers.¹⁸ Wilson was also influential in the founding of the City Colored Orchestra, which began in 1929 thanks to a private donation and was thereafter supported by the City of Baltimore.¹⁹ He later became director of the orchestra, and for many years led the group through ambitious programs, featured local soloists and composers, and ensured that the orchestra was a large part of the musical environment for Douglass High School students by having open rehearsals at the school every Thursday morning.

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Wilson grew up studying music with teachers from Peabody, but was never allowed to enroll at the school or receive a degree despite his talent and influence.^{21,22} The only other mention of Wilson found in Peabody records comes from Rowland Posey, Director of Peabody’s Summer School, in August of 1950. Apparently Wilson had taken a summer class for voice teachers that was offered at Eastern High School, but still owed Peabody \$35 after the end of the session. After some correspondence with Wilson about the issue, Posey wrote to William L. Marbury, President of the Peabody Institute, “I feel that ‘he doth protest too much’ and has

¹⁵ Ibid., 43.

¹⁶ Ibid., 48.

¹⁷ Wilson’s column was later called “Concords and Discords.”

¹⁸ Ibid., 49, 51.

¹⁹ Ibid., 57.

²⁰ Ibid., 101-102.

²¹ Ibid., 37-38.

²² Wilson’s son, Llewellyn Wilson, Jr., did enroll in piano lessons at a Peabody Preparatory branch held at Douglass High School in 1942-43. (Llewellyn Wilson, Jr. Record Card 1942-1943, Peabody Conservatory Preparatory Department, Office of the Registrar Records; Preparatory Enrollment Records, Folder 5 Daybook Vol. 33 1942-43, VII-1.D.5, Preparatory Daybooks 1923-1943, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.)

deliberately failed to pay the \$35.00 balance, although he is ostensibly a responsible person and a voice teacher at, I believe, Douglass High School.”²³ Wilson passed away two months later, and although Peabody had planned to file suit against him, they dropped the issue after his death.²⁴ Wilson was such a legend and influence in the classical music community in Baltimore, and it was a great loss for both Wilson and Peabody that their only interaction was over a disputed bill. Wilson wished to study at Peabody, and lived with the regret that he was ineligible because of his race.²⁵ Whether members of the Peabody community knew of Wilson’s talent and influence and simply never acknowledged it, or whether the African-American community was so separated that Peabody never heard about his many accomplishments, the nature of their relationship was reflective of many similar situations over the years.

Soprano Anne Wiggins Brown was one of Wilson’s first students at Douglass High School. Brown grew up going with her mom to the theatre and the opera, which was her earliest musical education. She writes in her autobiography, “It...irritated me that my Papa, who was darker than his children, could never go to a theater downtown with us. We had to ‘pass’ (to pretend to be white) and I disliked myself each time I went. I felt that I was betraying my father and I told him so. He insisted that we go - both to the theater and to the opera - saying that the education we got was well worth my feelings of guilt.”²⁶ In her early years of music lessons, Brown’s parents knew without asking that she would not be allowed to study at Peabody because

²³ Letter from Rowland Posey to William L. Marbury, 1950 August 5, Folder 5, Box 26, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 2.

²⁴ Letter from Rowland Posey to William L. Marbury, 1950 September 26, Folder 5, Box 26, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

²⁵ Fields, “William Llewellyn Wilson: A Biography,” 38.

²⁶ Anne Wiggins Brown, *Songs from a Frozen Branch*, Draft of English translation, Anne Brown Collection, Ann Brown, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 7.

of her race, and she was also turned down by a nearby convent.²⁷ Eventually, she succeeded in finding an African-American piano teacher²⁸ and received much of her vocal training at Douglass High School under W. Llewellyn Wilson. Brown had many experiences in excellent productions at Douglass and later reflected, “When I see high school productions today, even in Norway, I realize how nearly professional those productions were. I received a good deal of training there.”²⁹ This training prepared her for a successful career, but the next step after graduation was not a clear one:

During the last year of high school, it was necessary to decide exactly what I wanted to study in order to make plans and preparations for the coming years. It would have been natural to matriculate in the excellent music school in our city - The Peabody Conservatory of Music - but once again we met that sad and dreary fact.....that inhuman policy of “no Negroes allowed.”³⁰

Brown was accepted to the Institute of Musical Art at the Juilliard School, and enrolled there after high school graduation in 1928. There she met George Gershwin, and was highly influential in the development of his opera *Porgy and Bess*, in which she starred in the lead role of “Bess.”

In the 1930s, soon after Anne Brown enrolled at Juilliard, Baltimore boasted of its own piano prodigy in a young African-American boy named Ellis Larkins. Larkins was celebrated in the Baltimore community and supported by the municipal director of music, Frederick Huber. He performed as a soloist with the Baltimore City Colored Orchestra, won competitions, made newspaper headlines in the *Afro-American* and the *Baltimore Sun*, and performed in venues across Baltimore. Larkins was warmly accepted everywhere he performed, and represented the hope for respect and equality in his community. In an article from the Baltimore *Afro-American*

²⁷ Ibid., 27.

²⁸ Ibid., 28.

²⁹ Elizabeth Schaaf, “Anne Brown: Gershwin’s original Bess to receive George Peabody Medal,” *Peabody News* (May/June 1998): 18.

³⁰ Brown, *Songs from a Frozen Branch*, 32.

on June 2, 1934, the writer says of Huber and Larkins, “Baltimore is fortunate in having a musical director who recognizes the potentialities of local talent and is broadminded enough to see that it is given expression. Baltimore is making two very definite contributions to the world of music. It is proving, first, that the musical propensities of persons of color are not limited to riotous jazz or mournful spirituals, and it is further proving that all of the realm of the classics is not confined to Nordics. May the municipal department of music busy itself to make more discoveries of prodigies and break down more established misconceptions about the race.”³¹

Among Larkins’ teachers were Josef Privette of the Gilman School, a private school for boys in the Roland Park area of Baltimore, and Pasquale Tallarico, a faculty member at the Peabody Conservatory. Although Larkins studied with Tallarico as well as other faculty members at Peabody, he was taught at home and could never officially enroll at the school.³² In a 1984 letter to Robert Pierce, then Director of the Conservatory, Larkins’ wife Crystal writes:

Ellis is a definite part of the Peabody. He studied there from the thirties until he left in 1940. Since he was the first Negro who was allowed to study there he is a part of its history. ...their segregated policy, at that time, prohibited them from giving Ellis formal credit. It was impossible to bend the rule for even one Negro. Ellis was deeply hurt by this treatment. It was as if he had not studied there. Until your letter arrived, he never had received any paper with the school letterhead. He did many benefits for them through the years he spent there. Among the papers on his early years, you will find a letter from the Johns Hopkins University with the program of the concert. Because of the unjust treatment given him there, he decided not to become a classical musician.³³ He told Newsweek Magazine he deviated however they were not told the real reasons. He still speaks of Peabody with great pride.³⁴

³¹ *Afro-American* article, 1934 June 2, Ellis Lane Larkins, 1933-1941, Box 1, Ellis Larkins papers, PIMS.0075 Series I: Photocopied Scrapbooks & Personal Papers, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University. This article could not be located through the *Afro-American* digital archives.

³² Ellis Larkins Peabody Enrollment, 1939-1940, Ellis Larkins correspondence (professional) 1973-1985, Box 2, Ellis Larkins papers, PIMS.0075 Series I: Photocopied Scrapbooks & Personal Papers, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

³³ Larkins went on to have a successful career as a jazz pianist, performing all over the world and collaborating with artists including Ella Fitzgerald, Joe Williams, and Chris Connor.

³⁴ Letter from Crystal Larkins to Robert Pierce, 1984 August 20, Ellis Larkins correspondence (professional) 1973-1985, Box 2, Ellis Larkins papers, PIMS.0075 Series I: Photocopied Scrapbooks & Personal Papers, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

Although it may not be the exact benefit concert to which Crystal Larkins referred, Larkins' early documents do include a concert program from a solo recital he performed at The Phipps Auditorium on April 21, 1936, for the "benefit of The Peabody Conservatory of Music."³⁵ Larkins was used by Peabody for its own benefit and promotion, and he must have felt this dissonance even as a 12-year-old. He was being used to raise money for an institution founded to develop talent exactly like his own, but that would not accept him. A couple years later, in 1938, Peabody hosted another 10-year-old pianist, a white boy named Peter Paul Loyanich.³⁶ They used Larkins, a Baltimore local and pride of the city, to raise money and promote the Institute although he was never welcomed at Peabody, but invited and welcomed Loyanich to campus to give a recital as a special guest. Although Larkins could not attend Peabody, in 1941 he received a scholarship to attend the Institute of Musical Art at Juilliard, where he enrolled in the piano department.³⁷

Baltimore Municipal Director of Music Frederick Huber made a point to support and encourage Larkins as a child, but never used his power to create positive change for African-American musicians in Baltimore. In fact, despite his influence, he often treated black musicians with little consideration and often used them only to build up his own reputation. He supported the founding of the City Colored Orchestra and Chorus, but favored white institutions

³⁵ Ellis Larkins Recital Program for Peabody Benefit, 1936 April 21, Ellis Lane Larkins, 1933-1941, Box 1, Ellis Larkins papers, PIMS.0075 Series I: Photocopied Scrapbooks & Personal Papers, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

³⁶ George Schaun, "Piano Prodigy's Debut," *The Sun* (1837-1992), 1938 January 23, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/543175953?accountid=11752> (accessed August 12, 2018).

³⁷ Ellis Larkins Juilliard Scholarship, 1941 June 19, Ellis Larkins corres, documents, clippings, programs 1930s, Box 2, Ellis Larkins papers, PIMS.0075 Series I: Photocopied Scrapbooks & Personal Papers, Arthur Friedheim Library Special Collections, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

when requesting funding;³⁸ he used Larkins for his own purposes and typically in “white only” venues; and he even denied Anne Brown a performance at the Lyric, of which he was the manager, in 1943, because of her refusal to play for a segregated audience.³⁹ Both Ellis Larkins and Anne Brown received honors from Peabody many years later: an honorary Bachelor’s Degree from Johns Hopkins University for Larkins in 1985, and the George Peabody Medal for Anne Brown in 1998. In a small way, these honors recognized Peabody’s fault in not accepting and encouraging these students in their early years, but it is also clear that this kind of acknowledgement has only happened in rare cases, particularly when the recipients were world-famous or there was outside pressure demanding this recognition. There are so many other young black Baltimoreans who must have experienced similar stories, but will never receive any form of acknowledgement or honor.

Preparatory Branches

In the early 1940s, the Peabody Preparatory was thriving and had several branches, with more on the way. All the official branches were in white, middle and upper class neighborhoods, but starting in 1940 the Preparatory also offered classes at Douglass High School. Although Douglass was included as a branch school, it was identified as “colored” and listed separately from all the other branches in reports and scholarship summaries.⁴⁰ It did not have benefits such as recitals and varied course options like the other schools did, and the nature of its relationship with Peabody is not very clear. Douglass continued to be listed among the branch schools

³⁸ Corine Anderson-Free, "The Baltimore Colored Orchestra and the City Colored Chorus," Order No. 9522409, The University of Alabama, 1994, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/304090572?accountid=11752>.

³⁹ "No Md. Theatre for Anne Brown." *Afro-American* (1893-1988), Dec 18, 1943, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/531410407?accountid=11752> (accessed August 24, 2018).

⁴⁰ Preparatory Enrollment Records, Folder 3 Daybook 31 1940-41, VII-1.D.5, Preparatory Daybooks 1923-1943, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 77.

through the spring of 1942, but the next fall the abbreviation for Douglass, “DHS,” was replaced with “NS” for “Negro Schools.”⁴¹ The rest of the branch schools, which were all white, continued to be listed separately and by name, but the black schools were grouped into one category. None of the African-American students enrolled were tested for entrance to the Conservatory at the end of the year in 1943,⁴² which is to be expected since they were not allowed to enroll, but most of them were listed as Carnegie Scholarship recipients.⁴³ In the school year of 1945-1946, Carnegie Scholarships were no longer included in enrollment records, and all but four African-American students - Paul Brent, James Parrish, Gordon Watkins, and Regina Wright - were no longer enrolled.⁴⁴ The following school year, 1946, the label “NS” disappeared from the enrollment list, and so did all the African-American students.⁴⁵ It is unclear exactly why these schools and students were removed from the Preparatory, although the disappearance of the Carnegie Scholarships may have been a factor in this decision.

Conversations about Race

Around the time the Peabody Preparatory removed the branch schools for African-American students, segregation was being challenged in the United States with some success: segregation in interstate travel was declared unconstitutional in 1946, Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers as the first African-American to play for a Major League baseball team in 1947, and the Armed Forces were desegregated in 1948. Some progress was being made

⁴¹ Preparatory Enrollment Records, Folder 5 Daybook 33 1942-43, VII-1.D.5, Preparatory Daybooks 1923-1943, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 43.

⁴² Ibid., 76.

⁴³ Ibid., 73-74.

⁴⁴ Preparatory Enrollment Records, Folder 5 Daybook Vol. 36 1945-46, VII-1.D.6, Preparatory Daybooks 1943-1956 [sic, should be 1946], Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁴⁵ Preparatory Enrollment Records, Folder 2 1946-47 part 2, VII-1.D.7, Preparatory Daybooks 1946-1951, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

in Baltimore during this time as well, although it would be nearly two decades before *de jure* segregation would be eliminated in the city, and *de facto* segregation continues to abound even today.

Earlier in the 1940s, however, conversations about prejudice and discrimination were happening in Baltimore. In 1943, a round table discussion was held at the Enoch Pratt Library by the Baltimore Adult Activities Council to address this question: “How can we instill the principles of true democracy in our children so as to make for better race relations?” The invitation to this discussion included a list of topics and speakers, including representatives from Johns Hopkins University, Morgan College,⁴⁶ Loyola College,⁴⁷ Goucher College, the Women’s Civic League, and the police department. The invitation is simply addressed “Dear Member,” and although it is found in the Dean’s Correspondence files, it is not clear which Peabody administration member was invited or whether they attended.⁴⁸

Whatever the relationship with Peabody may have been, this discussion of racial prejudice seems to be well ahead of Peabody’s thinking on the admission of black students. It would be several more years before the question was officially raised at Peabody, and over a decade before they eliminated all of their policies barring African-American students from the school. Other than Douglass High School and the other “Negro Schools” that were included in Peabody’s Preparatory branches, there seemed to be a large indifference to and disregard of the possibility of opening Peabody to African-American students until the late 1940s.

⁴⁶ Now Morgan State University.

⁴⁷ Now Loyola University.

⁴⁸ Baltimore Adult Activities Council Discussion Agenda, 1943 March 4, Baltimore Adult Activities Council 1942-43, Dean’s Correspondence 1940-1943, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts

Although African-American students were not allowed to enroll at Peabody during this time, on November 9, 1944 the Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts (BIMA) was founded with the purpose of being a conservatory of music open to all races. The Institute was founded by Dr. J. Leslie Jones, a prominent African-American chiropractor in Baltimore; Robert P. Iula, a composer, conductor, and flautist in the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra; and Evelyn Ebert, who described herself as “experienced in public relations work and active in social service.”⁴⁹ The founders were passionate about their vision for an inclusive music school, and wrote into its constitution and bylaws that, “the doors of this institute of music shall be open to all races of people...The faculty of this institute of music shall be qualified music teachers and may be of any race...The Director must be a graduate of a recognized school of music or conservatory of pedagogic and administrative ability...The President of this corporation shall be of Afro-American descent...etc.”⁵⁰ In her detailed history of the Institute, Ebert writes, “From the beginning the organization had the collaboration and endorsement of many public spirited Baltimoreans, including the Baltimore Branch of the National Association of Negro Musicians.”⁵¹ This enthusiasm is evidenced by the rapid growth in enrollment at the Institute. After its founding in 1944, the BIMA operated out of a small residential basement. As demand increased, however, classes moved to a three-room suite, then a row-home, and finally to the beautiful Upton Mansion at 811 Lanvale Street in 1947. This journey was supported by many generous sponsors, but most of all by Jones. Ebert remembers:

⁴⁹ Evelyn Ebert, *The Maturity of a Mansion*, PAM 11,240, H. Furlong Baldwin Library Special Collections, The Maryland Historical Society, 12.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

By the time the school was physically transferred to 811 Lanvale Street, Dr. and Mrs. Jones had sacrificed their personal lives, their hobbies and other interests - and a goodly portion of their income - in order to devote their efforts to the conduct of the conservatory curriculum.⁵²

Some of the Institute's other leaders included Felix Robert Mendelssohn of the famous Mendelssohn family, Peabody alumnus Hugo Weisgall, Hans Flexner, and Herman Schwarz, who were all directors of the Institute, as well as conductor and composer A. Jack Thomas, who served on the Board of Trustees.⁵³

The curriculum developed quickly at the BIMA, and a surviving bulletin from the 1948-1949 school year outlines courses offered at both the Conservatory and Preparatory levels. The descriptions are extremely thorough, detailing prerequisite skills, learning objectives, and credits allotted for each course, as well as fees for enrolling as either a full-time or part-time student.⁵⁴ The course offerings at the BIMA were almost identical to those offered at Peabody at the time, and the choice to have both Conservatory and Preparatory levels mirrors Peabody's department structure. In just a few years, the founders of the Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts had cultivated an extremely high level of instruction and learning at the school, pointing towards a determination by the Baltimore community to provide a high level of education for young black musicians at a time when Peabody was refusing to do so.⁵⁵

The 1948-1949 bulletin represents a time when the BIMA was thriving, and two concert programs from April, 1949 document the full effect of this growth with their impressive

⁵² Ibid., 13.

⁵³ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁴ The Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts Bulletin, 1948-1949, H. Furlong Baldwin Library Special Collections, The Maryland Historical Society, 20-23.

⁵⁵ Peabody Conservatory of Music Year Book, 1948-1949, Series D: Conservatory catalogs and class schedules, Peabody Institute publications and printed materials, PIRG.11.01, Arthur Friedheim Library Archives, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

repertoire and full rosters of musicians. Both programs are titled *Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts Spring Music Festival*. On April 6, 1949⁵⁶ a Chamber Orchestra Concert was presented at the Baltimore Museum of Art and included fantasias by Purcell, a Concertino by Janaček, Symphony No. 45 (“The Farewell”) by Haydn, Violin Concerto No. 4 by Mozart with soloist Louia Vaughn Jones, an internationally renowned African-American violinist and teacher,⁵⁷ and Symphony for Strings by William Schuman.⁵⁸ Just four days later on April 10, 1949 a 70-piece orchestra and 150-piece chorus from BIMA presented Verdi’s Requiem Mass at the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute.⁵⁹

In 1951, the Institute had its first graduation ceremony,⁶⁰ and by this point the school had a music library, frequent recitals, practice rooms, scholarships, and everything else that comes with a Conservatory-level school of music.⁶¹ There was only one problem: they needed more space. Within the next few years plans were drawn up to build a large new facility, including an auditorium that would seat 2,500.⁶² Unfortunately, the plans never reached fulfillment and in a sudden turn of events the Institute was forced to close its doors by the end of 1954. Integration was beginning to find its way into Baltimore society, the school lost funding, and the demand for a place specifically open to African-American students decreased as other institutions began to

⁵⁶ A surviving recording of this concert is held in the Arthur Friedheim Library Archives. (Randolph S. Rothschild papers, including the Chamber Music Society of Baltimore records, PIMS.0098, Arthur Friedheim Library Archives, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.)

⁵⁷ “Notable Past Residents: Louia Vaughn Jones (1895-1965),” Park View, D.C., accessed September 7, 2019, <https://parkviewdc.com/2014/06/20/notable-past-residents-louia-vaughn-jones-1895-1965/>.

⁵⁸ Chamber Orchestra Concert Program, Spring Music Festival Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts, 1949 April 6, H. Furlong Baldwin Library Special Collections, The Maryland Historical Society.

⁵⁹ Verdi Requiem Mass Concert Program, Spring Music Festival Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts, 1949 April 10, H. Furlong Baldwin Library Special Collections, The Maryland Historical Society.

⁶⁰ Ebert, *The Maturity of a Mansion*, 16.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 19.

open their doors. Ebert laments that after its closing, most of the essential documents pertaining to the Institute were lost:

The Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts, Inc. was doomed...the premises vacated...all assets absorbed in the settlement of debts. During the ensuing excitement and exhaustion most of the documentary evidence of the birth, growth and development of the school became lost. It is unfortunate because some of the promotional material pertaining to the various fundraising efforts; the affairs that were sponsored by many civic groups...the Minutes of Meetings...the hundreds of persons whose names really deserve recognition for some part they played in this history...all are lost because in the discouragement of dissolution it was assumed there would be no further need for this data.⁶³

Many years later, Ebert took it upon herself to record as much of the Institute's history as she could remember, including the history of the Upton Mansion before and after it housed the Institute from 1947 to 1954. Ebert's document, the programs, and the bulletin, all housed at the Maryland Historical Society, are the only known documents recording the history of this significant organization. Without Ebert's document, the loss of so much vital information could have easily led to a complete erasure of knowledge about the Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts. This begs the question of how much similar history from this time period has been erased, and as Ebert says, there are likely "hundreds of persons whose names really deserve recognition for some part they played in this history."⁶⁴

Policy Change at the Peabody Institute

At the end of the 1948-1949 school year, when the Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts was at its height, Peabody received a significant letter that would force them to discuss the long-avoided issue of accepting African-American students. On June 20, 1949, Morgan College student and pianist Paul A. Brent wrote a letter to Dr. Robert L. Jackson asking for help enrolling

⁶³ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

at the Peabody Conservatory.⁶⁵ Brent was enrolled in the Douglass High School branch of the Preparatory for several years before joining the military, then enrolling at Morgan College. Robert L. Jackson, the recipient of Brent's letter, was a prominent black physician, surgeon, and civic worker in Baltimore and an advocate for African-American representation in politics.⁶⁶ It is unclear how Brent and Jackson knew each other, although Jackson's daughter and Brent both went to Frederick Douglass High School (albeit at different times) and the families lived only a few blocks away from each other. It seems most likely, however, that Jackson may have served as a mentor to Brent through a program run by the Alpha Kappa Psi Fraternity, of which Jackson was a member.⁶⁷ The program, called Guide Right, serves to provide mentors for high school aged boys to prepare them for graduation and college.⁶⁸

Whether or not this specific program facilitated their relationship, their correspondence makes it clear that Jackson was a mentor of Brent's and had known and helped him for several years. The day after Brent's letter was sent, Jackson wrote on his behalf to former Mayor Howard W. Jackson, with whom he had worked for many years, asking for any help he might be able to provide.⁶⁹ Brent's inquiry about enrolling at Peabody made it to Conservatory Director Reginald Stewart by way of the former mayor, who wrote to Stewart immediately after receiving Robert L. Jackson's letter. He enclosed the letters from Jackson and Brent, wrote a brief note,

⁶⁵ Letter from Paul A. Brent to Robert L. Jackson, 1949 June 20, Wm. L. Marbury 1949 July-Dec Folder 1, Box 27, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees records, PIRG.02 *Series C: Officers*, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁶⁶ Bettye Murphy, "They Are in the Limelight," *Afro-American* (1893-1988), 1939 August 12.

⁶⁷ "About BAC," The Baltimore (MD) Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., accessed 2018 September 4, <http://www.benchmarkkappas.org/chapter/history/>.

⁶⁸ "Guide Right," The Baltimore (MD) Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., accessed 2018 September 4, <http://www.benchmarkkappas.org/guide-right/>.

⁶⁹ Letter from Robert L. Jackson to Howard W. Jackson, 1949 June 21, Wm. L. Marbury 1949 July-Dec Folder 1, Box 27, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees records, PIRG.02 *Series C: Officers*, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

and asked Stewart to call him.⁷⁰ Thus started a long discussion among Reginald Stewart, Peabody Institute President William Marbury, and the entire Peabody Institute Board of Trustees. A prominent political figure had placed before them a question that they had never faced, and at a time when they were forced to give it careful consideration rather than dismiss it completely.

Acceptance of Paul Brent

The first record of Reginald Stewart's response to Brent's inquiry is a brief handwritten memo dated July 2, 1949 and addressed to William Marbury, who, along with his role as President of the Institute, was Chair of the Board of Trustees and a prominent Baltimore lawyer.⁷¹ Stewart wrote to Marbury, "What do you want to do about it?" and expressed his own opinion that they should "admit him only if, upon examination, he proves to be extremely talented."⁷² This language conveys reluctant willingness that seems to come from a sense of duty to make an exception for extreme talent. Stewart sets the tone for many of those involved in the conversation. Although some are slightly more positive and others more resistant, hesitancy pervades the conversation, along with an eventual resignation to change that is more forced than willingly accepted.

⁷⁰ Letter from Howard W. Jackson to Reginald Stewart, 1949 June 21, Wm. L. Marbury 1949 July-Dec Folder 1, Box 27, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees records, PIRG.02 *Series C: Officers*, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁷¹ In his autobiography, *In the Catbird Seat*, Marbury includes information about his father, a geneticist and racist who played a large role in establishing discriminatory housing policies in Baltimore. Marbury also documents his own transformation from agreeing with his father's racist actions to standing for desegregation and racial equality following World War II. William L. Marbury, *In the Catbird Seat*, (Baltimore, Md.: Maryland Historical Society, 1988).

⁷² Letter from Reginald Stewart to William L. Marbury, 1949 July 2, Wm. L. Marbury 1949 July-Dec Folder 1, Box 27, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees records, PIRG.02 *Series C: Officers*, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

After receiving Stewart's memo, Marbury wrote to all the members of the Board's Conservatory Committee on July 8, informing them of the situation and stating that "we are brought face to face with the issue whether to modify our long-standing rule against the admission of negro students."⁷³ After receiving the responses of the Conservatory Committee, Marbury wrote to the rest of the Board on July 22 with the same question.⁷⁴ Although there is no record of a written policy or statement against admitting African-American students, "policies" and "rules" are mentioned in this discussion and in several others that would occur in the following years.

It is hard to say whether this "policy" was ever officially discussed and created or whether it fell into place by default. Most of the other major music schools operating in the United States at this time, including the Curtis Institute,⁷⁵ Eastman School of Music,⁷⁶ Oberlin Conservatory,⁷⁷ and New England Conservatory,⁷⁸ have found no record of any such policy, although there is no doubt that racial discrimination occurred nonetheless. Whether there was ever discussion at Peabody of establishing this policy or not, it did exist and it was openly acknowledged and discussed by the Board of Trustees between 1949 and 1955. Despite the reluctant language used by Stewart and the unspoken policy of the Conservatory, Marbury makes his opinion clear in his letter to the trustees. "For my own part, I feel that the time has come to

⁷³ Letter from William L. Marbury to Henry Callard, 1949 July 8, Wm. L. Marbury 1949 July-Dec Folder 1, Box 27, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees records, PIRG.02 *Series C: Officers*, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁷⁴ Letter from William L. Marbury to Douglas H. Gordon, 1949 July 22, Wm. L. Marbury 1949 July-Dec Folder 1, Box 27, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees records, PIRG.02 *Series C: Officers*, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁷⁵ Barbara J. Benedett, Digital Archivist, Rock Resource Center, Curtis Institute of Music, email to author, 2018 June 5.

⁷⁶ Vincent Lenti, Professor of Piano/Historian, Eastman School of Music, email to author, 2018 June 5.

⁷⁷ Louisa Hoffman, Archial Assistant, Oberlin College Archives, email to author, 2018 June 4.

⁷⁸ Maryalice Perrin-Mohr, Archivist/Records Manager, Blumenthal Family Library, New England Conservatory, email to author, 2018 June 5.

eliminate the racial barrier to study in the Advanced Department of the Conservatory. It seems to me that Mr. Stewart's approach is the right one to pursue."⁷⁹ There is a disconnect between Marbury's firm recommendation to "eliminate the racial barrier" and Stewart's qualifying statement seen above that Brent would be admitted only if he "proves to be extremely talented." At first glance Marbury and Stewart seem to agree with each other, but they speak very differently about the issue. No one seemed to notice or acknowledge this at the time, but it is important to recognize the tension between these different kinds of language as this story progresses.

As responses from the Board members arrived, there was a common theme of agreement with Marbury but with varying degrees of comfort with the situation. Some members felt confident that it was time to make this change, but expressed concerns or made suggestions about doing so without making a scene. Others talked about the state of the world, drew conclusions about integration happening "too fast" or being forced, or insisted upon running it by students and faculty members. On July 29, after receiving responses from most of the Board members, Marbury sent an update to Stewart. In this letter he states, "At the first meeting of the Board of Trustees we shall discuss the general question of removing the racial barrier altogether. It is my expectation that the majority of the Trustees will favor this action."⁸⁰ Two and a half months still remained between this statement and the meeting to which he referred. Soon after this letter, he would receive three more responses from Trustees which may have changed his

⁷⁹ Letter from William L. Marbury to Henry Callard, 1949 July 8, Wm. L. Marbury 1949 July-Dec Folder 1, Box 27, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees records, PIRG.02 *Series C: Officers*, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁸⁰ Letter from William L. Marbury to Reginald Stewart, 1949 July 29, Wm. L. Marbury 1949 July-Dec Folder 1, Box 27, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees records, PIRG.02 *Series C: Officers*, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

expectations. We do not know what other conversations may have occurred between this July 29th letter and the October 18th Board meeting, but his expectation concerning the elimination of the racial barrier altogether would not be fulfilled.

After sending this update to Stewart, Marbury received responses from Board members F. Grainger Marburg, J. Hambleton Ober, and Douglas Gordon, and the latter two of these were the most negative of all the responses he received. Ober says in his letter from August 2, "...after giving further consideration to this problem I find that I am in agreement with you provided it is not used to set a precedent but that each future case will be decided upon its own merits."⁸¹ He also mentioned that "a line, perhaps a fine one, can be drawn between activities...which require individual instruction rather than work in the Classroom."

In the end, only one Board member, Douglas Gordon, fully opposed the acceptance of Paul Brent to the Conservatory. His letter is particularly disturbing, claiming, "In our climate, the presence of negroes can to some be extremely offensive."⁸² He also expresses concerns about a drop in enrollment and creating a "mixed race," and eventually concludes, "If the applicant for the Conservatory is really of outstanding talent, the Peabody should give him financial aid enabling him to study at the Conservatory in Boston which is not vexed with the problem in question." These two are the most nauseating responses, but the others are many and varied, and shed a great deal of light on the environment and attitudes surrounding the beginning of the process of integration at Peabody.⁸³ Despite the Board's concerns and Douglas Gordon's

⁸¹ Letter from J. Hambleton Ober to William L. Marbury, 1949 August 2, Wm. L. Marbury 1949 July-Dec Folder 1, Box 27, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees records, PIRG.02 *Series C: Officers*, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁸² Letter from Douglas H. Gordon to William L. Marbury, 1949 August 2, Wm. L. Marbury 1949 July-Dec Folder 1, Box 27, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees records, PIRG.02 *Series C: Officers*, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁸³ All responses from the Board of Trustees are included in Appendix 1.

objection, Paul Brent was accepted into the Peabody Conservatory and enrolled in the fall of 1949, graduating in the class of 1953 with a Teacher's Certificate in piano.

On October 18, 1949, nearly three months after the correspondence about Paul Brent ended, the first Board of Trustees meeting of the school year was held. A number of topics were discussed that day, both continuing conversations from previous meetings and raising new issues that were being discussed for the first time. Among them was the application of Paul Brent to the Conservatory, and recognition of his recent acceptance and enrollment. According to the minutes of the meeting, after Marbury updated the Trustees on the results of their summer correspondence, "Considerable discussion followed in which it was generally agreed that the Trustees had acted quite advisedly and this matter had been very discreetly handled and that no publicity would be given to the decision."⁸⁴

Negative publicity was something many of the Trustees mentioned in their letters in some form, and it seems they were very pleased with themselves for keeping what they seemed to regard as an annoying inconvenience under the radar. They went on to discuss how to move forward, and this ended with the decision to accept African-American students only on a case-by-case basis, as Mr. Ober had suggested in his letter. "It was decided that the Board would not at the current meeting reach any decision as to a general policy on admitting colored students to the Advanced Department, but each case would be decided on its own merits." In addition to this, they decided there was no need or obligation to admit African-American students to the Preparatory Department, since the same training could be received at the Institute of Musical Arts.

⁸⁴ Peabody Institute Board of Trustees minutes, 1949 October 18, Minutes Vol. 7, June 20 1939 thru June 16 1952, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 7.

Progress or Procrastination?

After this meeting concluded, there were no real discussions among the Board of Trustees regarding integration until 1954. During the five years between these discussions, however, there were several letters hinting that people in Baltimore other than the Board of Trustees were concerned about Peabody's policies and were demanding change. One of these letters came from Rowland Posey, director of the Peabody Summer School, just a year after Brent's admission to the Conservatory. On August 5, 1950, he sent a letter to William Marbury recapping the year's summer school and listing recommendations for the coming years. One of his suggestions simply read: "That negroes be admitted to the Summer School." He offered no explanation for this request, and his suggestion was not pursued. In this same letter he complained of W. Llewellyn Wilson, mentioned previously, and his remaining tuition balance for the summer class he took at Eastern High School.⁸⁵ At the following Board of Trustees meeting, Posey's suggestion was discussed: "Mr. Stewart stated Mr. Posey, Manager of the Summer School, recommended that the Summer School courses be made available to negroes but that he (Mr. Stewart) opposed such action at this time. Mr. Marbury advised Mr. Stewart that the Board would certainly not go counter to his recommendation."⁸⁶

On February 27, 1951, several months after Posey's suggestion that African-American students be admitted to the Summer School, Marbury received a letter from Virginia Carty, Dean of the Conservatory. In the second half of her letter she says:

Now about colored students. Up to the present time Mr. Stewart has told us to enroll only those colored students who are ready to undertake the Degree course. So far only one of the applicants has met the requirements and is enrolled at Peabody.

⁸⁵ Letter from Rowland Posey to William L. Marbury, 1950 August 5, Folder 5, Box 26, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 1.

⁸⁶ Peabody Institute Board of Trustees minutes, 1950 October 17, Minutes Vol. 7, June 20 1939 thru June 16 1952, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 7.

In case anyone applies and passes the entrance examinations, will we accept him or her for Degree courses in the Summer School or defer his enrollment until the fall term?⁸⁷

This letter asks a question related to Posey's suggestion, but clearly shows that there was inconsistency in the admission policy. African-American students were allowed to enroll at the Conservatory during the school year for a Teacher's Certificate, Bachelor of Music Degree, or Master of Music Degree, and the Conservatory catalogue from 1951-52 states, "Credits earned in the Summer School will be accepted for the Teacher's Certificate and the Degrees in the Advanced Department."⁸⁸ Despite the fact that Summer School classes were the same level as those offered during the year, African-American students could enroll only as part of their certificate or degree program and not during the summer. Carty's letter also raises a question about the original decision that "each case would be decided on its own merits." Although Brent was still the only black student to enter the Conservatory, the language Carty uses here is that if a student is "ready to undertake the Degree course" they would be admitted with no other qualifications. Whether this was true or not is unclear, but the change in language around the issue is notable.

Nearly two years after this, in December of 1952, the absence of an explicitly discriminatory policy against accepting African-American students to the Conservatory was confirmed more emphatically by another letter from Carty. She received a request for a follow-up report in response to the Regional Conference on Discrimination in Administrative

⁸⁷ Letter from Virginia Carty to William L. Marbury, 1951 February 27, Folder 4, Box 26, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁸⁸ Peabody Conservatory of Music, 1951-52 Catalogue, Catalogue 1951-56, MT 4 B2P43 C6 Archives Collection, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 19.

Practices in Colleges and Universities which took place in April 1950.⁸⁹ The request was for any updates on the admission and inclusion of minority groups on campus. Reginald Stewart told Carty, “We have nothing to report.”⁹⁰ She responded to the request by saying, “I have no significant changes to report to you, but our policy is to accept students for regular work in the Conservatory whenever they are ready to undertake the course. This is done regardless of race, religion or creed.”⁹¹ This response is even more assertive than her question to Marbury about the summer school two years before, and although Paul Brent is the only African-American student known to have enrolled before 1955, it is fairly clear that there was no acknowledged policy against the admission of African-American students to the Conservatory by this time.

The early 1950s was also a time of tension between students and administration at the Conservatory. In May of 1951, William Marbury wrote to Reginald Stewart expressing the opinions of a Board member, Paul Thomas, about the student body’s distrust of the administration.⁹² Marbury says, “This tension, according to Thomas, is no new development. To his knowledge, it has been characteristic of the Peabody Conservatory for the past thirty years.” Thomas believed that the tension was the worst it had ever been, however, because of the recent dismissal of a beloved faculty member, Renée Longy. Later in the letter, Marbury says, “The students feel a lack of personal interest and a lack of encouragement of their efforts to develop an esprit de corps.” This must have been true, because soon after this, the student body and faculty

⁸⁹ Regional Conference on Discrimination in Higher Education, 1952 November 10, Regional Conf. on Discrimination...Nov. 1952, 40-53 Dean’s Correspondence, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁹⁰ Letter from Virginia Carty to Reginald Stewart, 1952 November 17, Regional Conf. on Discrimination...Nov. 1952, 40-53 Dean’s Correspondence, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁹¹ Letter from Virginia Carty to Walter E. Hager, 1952 December 19, Regional Conf. on Discrimination...Nov. 1952, 40-53 Dean’s Correspondence, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁹² Letter from William L. Marbury to Reginald Stewart, 1951 May 17, Folder 4, Box 26, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

jointly submitted a 20-page document of complaints and grievances to the administration, which although undated was likely submitted in the 1951-1952 school year.⁹³ This document covered a wide range of issues, but race is only mentioned in one instance. On page 8 of the document, under “Relations with the Faculty,” it states: “Following a heated discussion in the office concerning a racial problem, during which Z-4 [a member of the theory faculty] had expressed his views quite vehemently, the Dean [Virginia Carty] said to Z-4: ‘You created a scene in the office — we don’t like that — we don’t need you Canadians to tell us how to behave.’”⁹⁴ Whatever this argument may have been about, it is significant that this is the only time race is mentioned in this very lengthy document of complaints. While race may have been talked about occasionally at this time at Peabody, it seems it was considered one of the least urgent problems among the students and faculty.

The last documented conversation about admitting African-American students to the Conservatory took place in correspondence between Reginald Stewart and William Marbury in January of 1954, just a few months before *Brown v. Board of education* was decided. Stewart had proposed to the heads of the Music Division of the Baltimore City Department of Education and to Preparatory Dean Leah Thorpe the idea of opening “a special branch of the Conservatory at Douglass High School for negro students.” They all advised him against going through with the idea “at this time when the question of segregation is a matter of Congressional consideration.”⁹⁵ Marbury responded in agreement, but said the new branch would not have to be

⁹³ Students’ Affairs Document, 1951-1952[?], Folder 12, Box 25, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁹⁵ Letter from Reginald Stewart to William L. Marbury, 1954 January 15, Folder 8, Box 24, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

segregated and that white students could enroll if they wished.⁹⁶ They decided not to raise this issue in a Board meeting, and the question seems to have dissolved after this conversation.

Policy at the Peabody Preparatory

While the acceptance of African-American students to the Conservatory was never discussed officially after the decision in 1949 to admit students on a case-by-case basis, it seemed to be accepted by 1952 that qualified students of any race could enroll. There was still resistance, however, to even considering this change for the Preparatory. Despite the fact that a decade earlier the Preparatory had had branches at public school facilities for African-American students, no black students had been allowed to enroll on campus, and since the closing of those branches in 1946 no alternatives had been discussed. In July of 1951, two years after Paul Brent was admitted to the Conservatory, the Preparatory was considering neighborhoods in which to open a new Preparatory branch. In the report on each neighborhood, there was included a school census that dictated “white only.”⁹⁷ Baltimore was very segregated at this time, and still is, because of redlining and other discriminatory housing policies. This means that while the designation “white only” does point to the Preparatory’s intentional rejection of black students, it is also likely that there were no black schools in the neighborhoods they were considering in the first place. Considering the acceptance of African-American students to the Preparatory was far out of mind at this point.

The dismissal of this issue continued until 1954, when requests started arriving from the Baltimore City School Board and other educators for the Preparatory to provide teachers for

⁹⁶ Letter from William L. Marbury to Reginald Stewart, 1954 January 19, Folder 8, Box 24, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

⁹⁷ Letter from Richard W. Case to Leah Thorpe, 1951 July 17, Folder 3, Box 26, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

African-American students. About a year before such letters began to arrive, however, Reginald Stewart received a unique letter from Dr. Eugene D. Byrd,⁹⁸ a prominent African-American dentist and activist in Baltimore. The letter was sent on March 24, 1953, and speaks of an incident in which a young African-American girl was turned away from the Preparatory because of her race. Byrd exposed Peabody's hypocrisy, pointing to the conflict between their supposed commitment to educating young musicians and their choice to immediately dismiss someone who fits their criteria in every way except with regard to their ethnic background. Towards the beginning of his letter, he says:

Of course, I am aware of the rules and regulations confronting an individual who assumes the leadership of a well-established institution such as the one you head. Nevertheless, heads of institutions can bring with them certain basic convictions that may be strong enough to augment or even replace established policies, when these convictions work in the best interest of the institution.⁹⁹

He follows this a few paragraphs later by saying, "We prove our lack of courage when we agree that a system is wrong but, lay the blame on the probable reaction of people who might object."

¹⁰⁰ He emphasizes the psychological damage inflicted upon the girl's whole family because of Peabody's praise of her talent and subsequent rejection of her as a student: whoever she met at Peabody clearly built up her hopes then turned her away. He ends with a firm and final statement:

Your disqualification of that little girl, after she had proven her ability by your standards, because of her ethnic background rather than the lack of ability was a most disgraceful act for any organization, especially one dedicated to the art of music. You may not reason as I do, however, "he who will not reason is a bigot; he who cannot is a fool; and he who dares not is a slave."¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Byrd's letter can be read in full in Appendix 2.

⁹⁹ Letter from Eugene D. Byrd to Reginald Stewart, 1953 March 24, Folder 5, Box 25, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 1.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 2.

The ideology behind this incident is identical to that with which Ellis Larkins dealt almost twenty years earlier. Deeply rooted racism produced a disconnect between acknowledging the extraordinary talent of young black musicians and allowing them to enroll at a school whose purpose was to nurture that talent.

A little over a year after Byrd's letter, and just a few days before *Brown v. Board of Education* was resolved, Conservatory Dean Virginia Carty received a letter from Kenneth Hjelmervik, Director of Music Education in the Baltimore Department of Education, who had had several interactions with Peabody before this point. In his letter, he requested that Peabody supply teachers for several African-American students who had been awarded Deiches Scholarships¹⁰² and were in need of private lesson instructors.¹⁰³ Reginald Stewart and Virginia Carty responded a few days later, two days after *Brown v. Board of Education*, saying they would provide teachers for the students either at a branch school "which may be in a neighborhood more convenient for these students," or at the main Peabody campus.¹⁰⁴

Soon after this, Reginald Stewart prepared a lengthy statement on segregation to present to the Board at their next meeting, which would take place on June 14, 1954. He recognized that segregation would end in the Baltimore Public Schools in the fall, and issued a lengthy proposal of issues and suggestions for how to move forward at Peabody.^{105,106} In the Board meeting several days later, this statement was presented and the following was recorded in the minutes:

¹⁰² No information on the source or quantity of these scholarships could be found.

¹⁰³ Letter from Hjelmervik to Virginia Carty, 1954 May 13, Education Department of Baltimore 1952-59, Folder 1, VIID3.3, Dean's Office General Correspondence 1925-59 Series D Subseries 3, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Virginia Carty to Hjelmervik, 1954 May 19, Education Department of Baltimore 1952-59, Folder 1, VIID3.3, Dean's Office General Correspondence 1925-59 Series D Subseries 3, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹⁰⁵ Report from Reginald Stewart to the Board of Trustees, 1954 June 14, Folder 8, Box 24, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Stewart's proposal can be read in full in Appendix 3.

Mr. Stewart read his report which commented at some length on the problem of the Conservatory arising out of the action of the School Board eliminating segregation in the Public Schools.

Considerable discussion followed in which several members of the Board participated. Mr. Stewart recommended:

1. That well qualified colored students be admitted to the Summer School.
2. That Saturday morning music clinics be established at the Public Schools if the city authorities are agreeable.
3. That no change be made in the present policy of admitting qualified colored degree students to the Advanced Dept.
4. Continue to refuse admission to colored students in the Preparatory Dept.

On motion of Mr. Butler, seconded by Mr. Paul, the Board approved the first three recommendations and requested the President to appoint a committee, with power to act, to consider how to deal with applications from colored people for admission to the Preparatory Dept. this fall and the question of whether or not they should be admitted.¹⁰⁷

The decision to continue excluding African-American students from the Preparatory – despite the desegregation of public schools, the direct request of the Director of the Department of Music to accommodate students, and the recent closing of the Institute of Musical Arts, which was the Board’s initial excuse for remaining segregated – is appalling and a humiliating landmark in Peabody’s history. Although a committee was appointed to continue the conversation about admitting black students to the Preparatory, they did not meet for several months. There is also no record of any Saturday morning music clinics being opened or even discussed after this meeting, although these were the suggested alternative to accepting black students to the Preparatory. The only real change that came as a direct result of the meeting was that black students were admitted to the Summer School, an idea that had been recommended four years earlier by Rowland Posey.

At the next Board meeting on October 26, 1954, “Mr. Marbury informed the Board that the matter of a report from a special committee with respect to a policy as to applications from

¹⁰⁷ Peabody Institute Board of Trustees minutes, 1954 June 14, Minutes Vol. 8, October 14 1952 thru June 17 1959, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 1.

colored students for admission to the Preparatory Department would be postponed.”¹⁰⁸ There is no explanation for this delay, but while Peabody postponed their decisions, other private schools were making changes. On November 30, Leah Thorpe, Dean of the Preparatory, wrote to Reginald Stewart informing him that the Friends School, a private Quaker school in Baltimore, had changed its policy and implemented a plan to accept African-American students based on a tiered system, adding more grades each year. She proposed a detailed plan for the Preparatory that followed the model of the Friends School and would lead to integration for all levels by 1959.¹⁰⁹ There is no record of any response to her proposal, either by letter or in a Board meeting.

Soon after this, on December 8, Stewart received an inquiry about the policies of the Peabody Preparatory on accepting black students:

Since the Baltimore Institute of Musical Arts no longer exists, it has come to our attention that there are some very talented colored children in the city to whom a musical education is denied. Obviously this is unfortunate for them, for Baltimore, and for music, itself.

There was some uncertainty concerning Peabody policy in this regard, and we should be immeasurably grateful to you if you would inform us about the possible admission of these children.¹¹⁰

Stewart sent this letter on to Marbury with a note that reads, “Dear Bill: This is obviously a test letter. I should like to have your opinion on how to answer it.”¹¹¹ Obviously, this letter added some unwanted pressure to make a decision.

¹⁰⁸ Peabody Institute Board of Trustees minutes, 1954 October 26, Minutes Vol. 8, October 14 1952 thru June 17 1959, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Leah Thorpe to Reginald Stewart, 1954 November 30, Folder 8, Box 24, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Katherine J. Lane to Reginald Stewart, 1954 December 8, Folder 8, Box 24, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹¹¹ Letter from Reginald Stewart to William L. Marbury, 1954 December 8, Folder 8, Box 24, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

The next Board meeting took place a few days after this letter was sent, on December 13, and the committee still had no decision. The minutes state:

Mr. Marbury, reporting for this Committee [Conservatory Committee], stated that a special meeting of the Committee had been held recently to consider, among other matters, the policy with respect to admitting colored students to the Preparatory Department. He informed the Board that no decision had been reached on the matter but that Mr. Stewart stated that he must have a decision prior to April, 1955 at which time applications for enrollment begin to come in. Mr. Marbury requested the members of the Board to consider this matter carefully and be prepared to make a decision thereon at the regular February, 1955 meeting of the Board.¹¹²

A week later, Marbury replied to Stewart with a suggested response to the letter mentioned above, saying that African-American students could be accepted to the Advanced Department, and that the policy regarding the rest of the Institute was being discussed and would likely be decided in time for the next academic year.¹¹³

After the holidays were over and classes resumed, another Board meeting followed and a decision was made on February 14, 1955. The minutes of the meeting state, "The question of admitting colored students to the Preparatory Department was discussed at considerable length, the Director stating that he recommended unrestricted admission of qualified colored students to all departments and branches of the Conservatory. Based on the Director's recommendation, the Board directed him to accept applications to all departments and branches of the school without respect to race or color."¹¹⁴ Finally, the struggle for policy change was over, but it was just the beginning of a long and continuing process.

¹¹² Peabody Institute Board of Trustees minutes, 1954 December 13, Minutes Vol. 8, October 14 1952 thru June 17 1959, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 1-2.

¹¹³ Letter from William L. Marbury to Reginald Stewart, 1954 December 21, Folder 8, Box 24, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹¹⁴ Peabody Institute Board of Trustees minutes, 1955 February 14, Minutes Vol. 8, October 14 1952 thru June 17 1959, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 2.

Perception of Integration at Peabody

Reginald Stewart has historically been recognized as one of Peabody's heroes, and the elimination of segregation is typically credited to him. Ray Robinson, who was Dean of the Conservatory from 1963-1966, wrote his dissertation on the history of the Peabody Institute, and in it recounted an interview with Stewart regarding his role in ending segregation at Peabody:

One of Reginald Stewart's most important contributions in the community was the elimination of the segregation barrier at Peabody. Although the Founder had hoped that the Institute would avoid intolerance, bigotry, and sectional jealousies, the Baltimorean of the nineteenth and early twentieth century did not include the Negro within these views of charity, tolerance, and benevolence. Thus, the new director was shocked when interviewing a prospective Negro graduate student during his first month as director to learn that the Institute was adhering to a policy of segregation. Appalled that a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music did not qualify for entrance to the conservatory because of racial restrictions, Stewart conceived a long-range plan to break down this barrier without creating undue controversy on the Board of Trustees and in the community.

Using the children's concerts of the Baltimore Symphony as a means of creating "mixed" audiences for the public school concerts, Stewart gradually dissolved the barrier. He applied the same principle at the conservatory by quietly enrolling Negro children first in the preparatory department and later at the advanced level without ever an incident of controversy or protest.¹¹⁵

Robinson's account tells a very different story than the documentation and correspondence found in the archives. Although Reginald Stewart became Director of the Conservatory in 1941, it was fourteen years before he eliminated segregation at Peabody. He hindered this process as much as or more than the other participants in the six-year conversation between Paul Brent's application to the Conservatory and the decision to accept African-American students to the Preparatory in 1955. While the elimination of discriminatory policies did require Stewart's approval in the end, to say he was responsible for this positive step is an exaggeration at best.

¹¹⁵ Ray Robinson, "A History of the Peabody Conservatory of Music," (D.Mus.Ed. diss., Indiana University, 1969): 398-399.

Accepted but Not Supported

After the Board's decision to drop Peabody's racist admission policies in February of 1955, the Preparatory accepted its first African-American students. In addition to this, African-American students began to enroll at the Conservatory for the first time since Paul Brent's acceptance in 1949. Policy change, however, does not necessarily translate to environment change. This first generation of African-American students at Peabody walked into a primarily white environment that would not accept them just years (or even months) before, and they did so with boldness and courage.

Life at Peabody

In the Fall of 1955, pianist Audrey Cyrus McCallum became the first African-American student to be accepted to the Peabody Preparatory. This was a big step in the right direction, but the environment for McCallum was far from ideal despite the exciting opportunity for musical training. McCallum's maiden name, Cyrus, is listed in a recital program from December 3, 1955, likely her first performance at Peabody, in which she performed Brahms' *Intermezzo in A*. The second piece on the same program, performed by another student, was by Claude Debussy, and is now called *The Little Black Boy*. Debussy's original title, however, includes the N-word, and this is how the piece was listed on the Preparatory recital program.¹¹⁶ In 1909, the same year the piece was written, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in the United States and "colored" was the accepted racial identifier at that time. Despite this, nearly fifty years later Debussy's piece was listed on Peabody's program with the original translation, which would have certainly been recognized as offensive in any other

¹¹⁶ Preparatory Program featuring Audrey Cyrus McCallum, 1955 December 3, Year Book Circulars Programs Bulletins Peabody Prep. Dept. 1955-56, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

context. It is unlikely that a connection between McCallum's first performance and the programming of this piece was intended or even noticed at the time, but it speaks to the environment that greeted the first generation of African-American students at Peabody.

Another student who entered the Preparatory just after McCallum was Shirley Hennigan Carter. She was interviewed in 2002 as a part of *Sounds and Stories*, an oral history project recording the stories of African-American musicians in Baltimore.¹¹⁷ In her interview, Carter speaks about the environment in those early years at the Peabody Preparatory:

...as far as the climate or environment back then, I do know that I got a lot of attention. I used to feel uncomfortable, because it was like I was in an environment where sometimes I felt like I shouldn't have been here or whatever. That was the feeling in the '50s. Because you have to remember that we were still going through the civil rights struggle and getting equal rights for Blacks. So to my community of African-Americans that was a wonderful thing, you know. You're going to Peabody? People looked at you in a different light. Those who understood, you know.¹¹⁸

It is easy to assume that this environment and sense of "otherness" for African-American students was due to the newness of the policy change in the Preparatory, but this was not the primary cause. The same feeling was present for African-American students in the Conservatory, where the policy had been changed six years earlier. After nearly a century of segregation, it would take more than policy change to create a healthy environment for African-American students at Peabody.

In 1955, the same year the Preparatory was desegregated, sopranos Veronica Tyler¹¹⁹ and Junetta Jones enrolled at the Conservatory, becoming the first African-American students to

¹¹⁷ *Sounds and Stories* was curated by the Peabody Archives, the Musicology Department of the Peabody Conservatory, and the History Department of the School of Arts and Sciences at Johns Hopkins University, and can be found on the Arthur Friedheim Music Library website.

¹¹⁸ *Sounds and Stories*, Shirley Hennigan Carter, pp. 8-9. The complete interview can be found online at <http://musiclibrary.peabody.jhu.edu/c.php?g=678315&p=4781387>.

¹¹⁹ On June 18, 1970, alumna and soprano Veronica Tyler became the first African-American to become a member of the Peabody Board of Trustees.

attend since Paul Brent's graduation two years before. One year later, after a year in the Preparatory, Audrey Cyrus McCallum followed their path. In a personal interview, McCallum said, "I just had the time of my life at Peabody!"¹²⁰ She excelled in her classes, and is especially proud that she always finished her hour-long theory tests in just fifteen minutes. Her primary regret is that she was never accepted into the Mu Phi Epsilon sorority at Peabody. Although she qualified in every way, as she was an exemplary student and even graduated third in her class, she did not receive the honor of being accepted. She did not recognize the unfairness of this as a student, but reflected later that she really ought to have been accepted and wishes that had been a possibility for her.

While some African-American students were accepted to Peabody in these first few years, it is entirely possible that others were still turned away on an unofficial basis. Alumnus Bill Myers shared his experience enrolling at Peabody in a personal interview. After spending a few months at Morgan State College, Myers joined the military and spent two years organizing music programs across Europe. When he returned to Baltimore and auditioned to enroll at the Conservatory, he was told that he needed one year in the Preparatory before he would be ready to enroll at the college level. Although he already had professional experience as a musician and doubted that he really needed this extra training, he enrolled in the Preparatory in 1956. The next year, he re-auditioned for the Conservatory and was told once again that he was not ready and needed another year in the Preparatory. At this point, Myers said, "I think I know what's going on here, and I'm going to have to have the NAACP call you." Myers enrolled at the Conservatory that year as a music education major. He was a successful student, became Vice

¹²⁰ Audrey Cyrus McCallum, interview by Debbie Kennison and the author, 2018 August 23.

President of the Student Council, became a member of the Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia fraternity, and was clearly at the same level as his classmates, but Peabody considered accepting him as a student only at the mention of approaching the NAACP.¹²¹

Alumna Myrtle Mack Dutton also enrolled at the Conservatory in 1957, and shared in a *Sounds and Stories* interview that some at the Conservatory made it clear that she wasn't quite welcome there. She recalls:

There were some when I was at Peabody who would say, oh, you have a gorgeous voice, but don't forget you're Afro-American. Like, you know, you have a fabulous voice, but, you know, don't forget. How can I forget? Wake up in the morning, look in the mirror and wash my face. But all in all it was a good experience.¹²²

Dutton was also told by a teacher that she should pursue conducting as a career. She responded, "...now wait a minute. They can hardly take me in this school and now I'm going to go up there and try out for a job for the New York Philharmonic because I can conduct...I mean, it was difficult even for the men, even more so for a woman. And an Afro-American. Oh no, no!"¹²³

Although this faculty member was trying to be encouraging, their comment displayed a lack of awareness of the kinds of challenges African-American students were facing, and how these challenges were different and more numerous than those faced by the rest of the Peabody community. Myers said of his time at Peabody, "In all white situations you must learn to switch gears whenever it is needed... drop the dialect, mingle, dress well, use your smarts." He also pointed out that the faculty members during his time at Peabody did not know enough about the lives of their black students, and that in order to teach them well they needed to learn about their

¹²¹ Bill Myers, interview by Debbie Kennison and the author, 2018 August 22.

¹²² *Sounds and Stories*, Myrtle Mack Dutton, p. 6. The complete interview can be found online at <http://musiclibrary.peabody.jhu.edu/c.php?g=678315&p=4781387>.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 7.

culture and the idiosyncrasies specifically related to African-American students and their needs and desires.¹²⁴

Insensitive comments and lack of understanding, however, were not the only factors creating a difficult environment for African-American students; these were just one aspect of a culture that in many cases was more overtly racist. In a *Sounds and Stories* interview, Bill Myers shared an experience that he and a classmate, Gloria Chester, had during their senior year (1960-1961) in one of their music education classes. One of their required class observations was scheduled to take place in Arlington, VA, an area that was still segregated. Myers remembers finding out about the observation:

...I was out that day when it was announced, and the next day I came in with my little shopping bag because I carried my books in a shopping bag. I walked in and I was told the class is going, but you can't go. And I said, I'm sorry, I don't understand that. And I will not accept that. And I said, you need to do something about that. Can we? And I was told, no, we cannot. I said then the school will get a call from the NAACP tomorrow morning and I turned around and I left. I didn't go to classes. I just went home. I walked all the way back to northwest Baltimore. I was just upset. And the next day the Dean [Peter Mennin] of the school called a meeting in North Hall,¹²⁵ and the whole class was there, and the question was asked why is it that these three students cannot, these two students cannot go? And he was told.¹²⁶

After Mennin was told by the students what was going on, he called in the music education teacher. Mennin asked her why this was happening, and she gave a similar response to what she had told Myers earlier: this is just how it is there and there is nothing we can do. Mennin said that this should not happen, and one by one Myers' white fraternity brothers stood up and said, "If Bill can't go, I'm not going." After a while, the girls joined them and Mennin cancelled the trip, which was supposed to happen the same day. A couple of years later, Myers learned from

¹²⁴ Myers, interview.

¹²⁵ Now the Leith Symington Griswold Hall.

¹²⁶ *Sounds and Stories*, William Myers, p. 7. The complete interview can be found online at <http://musiclibrary.peabody.jhu.edu/c.php?g=678315&p=4781387>.

his employer that a note had been written on his Peabody record: “He’s a troublemaker.” He had voiced an expectation that he and other black students receive the same rights and education as their classmates, and as a result of this was labeled a troublemaker.¹²⁷ The discriminatory trip may have been cancelled, but the environment at Peabody was still one that did not welcome the voices of black students. This incident occurred twelve years after Paul Brent was accepted to Peabody, and African-American students were still facing the reality that they would not receive the same education as their peers.

Life in Mount Vernon

In addition to the environment on the Peabody campus, Peabody’s location in a white area of town also presented difficulties for African-American students who enrolled. Segregation in restaurants was common in Mount Vernon until 1962, when laws were passed in Baltimore to end segregation in public accommodations.¹²⁸ About a year before enrolling at Peabody in 1957, Myrtle Mack Dutton was traveling to and from a concert with several white friends who wanted to stop for something to eat in the Mount Vernon area. They were confused when Dutton was still sitting in the car after they got out. In her *Sounds and Stories* interview she related, “I said, look, I can’t go in. They said oh yes you can, you’re human. And they dragged me into the place. And I said, oh gosh, I did not want this scene.”¹²⁹ After sitting in the restaurant for awhile, Dutton’s friends asked the waitress to wait on her and were told that she could not be served. After this her friends said “if she can’t eat, we don’t either,” and walked out, but Dutton notes that it was something of a reality check for them:

¹²⁷ Myers, interview.

¹²⁸ “Public Accommodations,” 1930-1965, Baltimore’s Civil Rights Heritage, accessed 2018 September 12, <https://baltimoreheritage.github.io/civil-rights-heritage/overview/1930-1965/>.

¹²⁹ *Sounds and Stories*, Myrtle Mack Dutton, p. 6.

...it was so quiet on the way back. They had not - I don't believe it was a set up thing. I think that they actually had forgotten that the rules existed just for that. Which was that I was with them because I was accepted as part of the group, and they were brought back to the reality that these rules exist.¹³⁰

Alumna Wilda Heiss, a white student and Baltimore native, shared in a personal interview that segregation in Mount Vernon restaurants was still prevalent several years later, in 1961. After a performance of Paul Hindemith's *Septet*, horn player and guest coach Joseph Eger wanted to go to dinner with some of the students who had performed. They went to a nearby Chinese restaurant, but were told they could not be served because Karl Porter, the bassoonist in the group, was black. They decided to go to a pizza place in the North Avenue and Charles Street area instead, but were told once again that they would not be served, and that if they did not leave they would be arrested. Joseph Eger was from New York City, which had many more integrated restaurants at the time, and he was very upset by this. He decided to stay in the restaurant and be arrested, letting the students make their own choice but encouraging them to stay with him. Heiss, who had to be in Pittsburgh the next day for a rehearsal with the American Wind Symphony Orchestra, decided to leave the restaurant because of this time constraint. The other students stayed with Eger and were arrested, and Eger paid for them to be released the next day. When Heiss was asked if other Peabody students had had similar experiences, she said that it wasn't really talked about, and that very few people even knew that this happened at all.¹³¹

Although Peabody did not yet have a cafeteria or dormitories at this time, they did have a lunch counter. According to Tom Griffin, a white student from Virginia who enrolled at Peabody in 1958, the counter was specifically provided so that black students would have a place to buy lunch. Griffin shared his memories of the lunch counter:

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Wilda Heiss, interview by Matt Testa and the author, 2018 August 23.

There was a little place where people could go and eat their lunches. There was a lady who would come 4 days a week, her name was Melinda, I can see it now. She had hot dogs and tuna fish sandwiches and they were the only things she had to sell for lunch.¹³² She sold them upstairs [on the third floor of the Conservatory building], and the other thing she had was a cigar box. You know what a cigar box is don't you? And if you asked for a hot dog she'd go to the box and she'd take a fork off the box, spear a hot dog, put it in a bun with some mustard, and give it to you. I never had to deal with her, I always brought that lunch from home...The reason that Melinda was there, that the school arranged for her to bring the lunches, is because those [African-American] students could not go to any of the little places to eat in that area.¹³³

Peabody appears to have recognized that segregation was still causing problems for their African-American students, but the lunch counter accommodation was made around the same time that Bill Myers and Gloria Chester were denied access to the school observation planned for their class. The inconsistency is striking: Peabody found a way to ensure access to food for black students, while at the same time classroom teachers were not ensuring that students received the educational experiences they had the right to expect.

A couple of years after the incident at the Mount Vernon restaurant, bassoonist Karl Porter decided to leave Peabody. Several faculty members had complained that Porter was disrespectful, and in January of 1963 Orchestra Director Elliott Galkin wrote a letter of complaint to Director Charles Kent.¹³⁴ Although he was only a part-time student, Porter was President of the Student Council; Galkin pointed out that this was against regulations, and called for his dismissal from the position. A few months later, in the summer of 1963, Porter exchanged several letters with Kent about a fee from Peabody that was wrongly incurred.^{135,136} His letters

¹³² According to several other alumni, Melinda also made an excellent chicken salad.

¹³³ Tom Griffin, interview by the author, 2018 June 13.

¹³⁴ Letter from Elliott Galkin to Charles Kent, 1963 January 22, Folder 15 (G), VII.A.9, Conservatory of Music 1962-1963 Correspondence A-G, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹³⁵ Correspondence between Karl Hampton Porter and Charles Kent, 1963 July 10 and 17, Folder 11 (P), VII.A.10, Conservatory of Music Series A: Office of the Director Subseries 6: 1962-63 General Files H-R, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

also include updates on his summer and an enthusiasm that suggests some amount of rapport with Kent, although the sense of familiarity does not seem to be reciprocated. That summer, Porter made the decision not to return to Peabody in the fall, and informed Kent of this decision in a letter from August 23:

Since you are well aware of the problems and conflicts I was confronted with in Baltimore, I won't elaborate on my decision to leave Peabody. I wish now things had worked out differently. The only consolation I can receive, having decided to leave, is knowing that you are behind me 100%.¹³⁷

It is unclear exactly what these conflicts may have been, but between the oppression in Mount Vernon and the difficulty with Peabody faculty members, it is no wonder that he decided to leave. Regardless, Porter went on to have a successful career as both a bassoonist and a conductor.

Alumna Phyllis Harris-Bronson, who enrolled at the Conservatory in 1962, shared in a personal interview¹³⁸ that she had a challenging but fulfilling experience at Peabody. In 1958, Harris-Bronson was one of nine African-American students to begin integration at Eastern High School, a large girls school in Baltimore. She began her studies at Peabody in the Preparatory during her junior year, and sang in the Conservatory Choir under Donald Regier. During her first year at the Conservatory, Harris-Bronson struggled to pay tuition. A few weeks after school started, Ray Robinson, who was Dean of the Conservatory at the time, called her into his office. She expected the worst: that she would be told she had to leave Peabody. Instead, Robinson told

¹³⁶ Letter from Karl Hampton Porter to Charles Kent, 1963 August 13, Folder 8 (P), VII.A.14, Conservatory of Music Series A: Office of the Director Subseries 6: 1963-64 General Files M-R, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹³⁷ Letter from Karl Hampton Porter to Charles Kent, 1963 August 23, Folder 8 (P), VII.A.14, Conservatory of Music Series A: Office of the Director Subseries 6: 1963-64 General Files M-R, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹³⁸ Phyllis Harris-Bronson, interview by the author, 2018 September 4.

her, “I need you to sign these papers. You have a full scholarship.” During her time at the Conservatory, she studied voice with Alice Gerstl Duschak. Harris-Bronson said Duschak was a wonderful and very strong woman. She survived a concentration camp during World War II, and was very kind to African-American students. Harris-Bronson had a fruitful time as a student at Peabody, and towards the end of her degree she studied under Audrey Cyrus McCallum while student teaching at Harlem Park Junior High, which she had attended many years before. Although she had a productive time at Peabody, Harris-Bronson said of her time there, “I’m not saying things didn’t happen, they did! But you knew you were making life more difficult when you came here.”¹³⁹ Her father wanted her to attend Morgan State University, but she insisted on enrolling at Peabody even though she knew the environment would be challenging.

Although things were still not easy, more African-American students were enrolling at Peabody. In 1964, a year after Karl Porter made the decision to leave the school, Mellasenah Morris enrolled as an undergraduate student. In a personal interview, she noted that she was one of ten African-American students to enroll at Peabody that year, and that this was the largest class of black students to enroll at that point. Peabody was the first place she had truly experienced an integrated environment, and she remembers the significance of meeting other African-American students there. This was not indicative, however, of a steady increase of black students at Peabody; when Morris graduated with her DMA in 1980, she was the only African-American student to walk across the stage.¹⁴⁰

Even after policies were put in place in 1962 that made *de jure* segregation illegal, these did not apply to *de facto* segregation and Mount Vernon still was not an easy place for

¹³⁹ Harris-Bronson, interview.

¹⁴⁰ Mellasenah Morris, interview by the author, 2018 August 31.

African-American students to live. Peabody had no dormitories for students, so those who had no family to stay with lived in nearby residence houses. Morris also recounted her experiences at Hall House, the residence house for women. She was the first and only African-American woman living there at the time, and was forced to board without a roommate because of this. During her first year at Hall House, she experienced many harmful comments and actions, and her room was even burglarized by other residents just two months after she moved in. After that first semester, her close friend Janet Jordan, another African-American student in her class at Peabody, moved into Hall House so she could have a roommate.

Morris was able to move out of Hall House after marrying at the end of her sophomore year, and says that although “there may have been racial undertones, and maybe overtones” at Peabody, it is still where she received all of her professional opportunities. Peabody supported her financially throughout her studies, and she learned how to cope while she was there. Two of her mentors, Tinka Knopf and Julio Esteban, encouraged her and helped her find opportunities to pursue a career in higher education administration. Under Knopf, Morris was the first academic advisor at Peabody. After Knopf left, Morris became the Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs, and she was later Dean of the Conservatory from 2008-2014. Morris was also the first African-American student to be accepted into the Mu Phi Epsilon sorority at Peabody.¹⁴¹

In 1964, the same year that Mellasenah Morris arrived at Peabody as a freshman, organist Carver Green enrolled at Peabody as a Master’s degree student. He did not receive his diploma until 2016. He dealt with the same microaggressions and difficulties faced by many other black students at Peabody, and was also drafted into military service halfway through his degree.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

During his final year, he did not pass his oral examinations because of a disagreement between faculty members. He was encouraged to retake them, and although he was hesitant, he decided to go through the process a second time. The same thing happened, and once again he did not pass. After this, he opted out and left Peabody to pursue his career. Decades later, Carver Green's story came to the attention of the Peabody administration by way of a Baltimore-based donor as well as alumnus and former Peabody faculty member Mark Markham. After searching for information about Green and receiving calls from the interested donor's attorney, Peabody administration presented Green with his diploma at his home and listened to his stories about his time at Peabody. This is in the same vein of the honors Peabody presented to Anne Wiggins Brown and Ellis Larkins. While all three of these instances are a positive step towards reconciliation and acknowledgement of past mistakes made by the Institute, they only occurred as a result of outside recognition of the musicians involved, and it is impossible to know how many similar situations will never be brought to light.¹⁴²

Despite the challenges that surrounded them at Peabody and in Mount Vernon, and the lack of black staff and faculty members to help them navigate their circumstances, African-American students at Peabody were excelling. In many cases, they received glowing recommendations and scholarship accommodations from the administration, and most in this first generation of African-American students at Peabody went on to have successful careers. They did this, however, in spite of their environment, not because of it.

¹⁴² Mark Markham, interview by the author, 2018 August 29.

Government Inquiries

As the 1960s continued to unfold, the Peabody Institute started receiving letters and requests from the government that were sent out to colleges and universities to address racial discrimination. One of these was sent by the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations on June 25, 1963. It congratulates Charles Kent, then Director of the Conservatory, on holding a cordial conversation with them and agreeing to eliminate racial identification from application forms. The letter reads:

Dear Mr. Kent:

Our Commission Arbitrator, Mrs. Berk, has informed us of your cordial meeting Monday, June 24th.

Your ready agreement to delete all application references to race and nationality supports the fine public image of the Peabody Institute.

Would that all the problems of our Commission so felicitously handled! [sic] Many thanks.¹⁴³

Shortly after this, William Marbury, at this time Chairman of the Board of Trustees although no longer President of the Institute, received a letter from United States President John F. Kennedy. This letter asked for a report on Peabody's progress concerning the acceptance of African-American students and strongly suggested the implementation of strategies to avoid racial discrimination. The original letter from Kennedy is not in the Peabody Archives, and while the correspondence in response to the letter sheds light on some important issues, it does not discuss the original document thoroughly. The New England Conservatory, however, received

¹⁴³ Letter from Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations to Charles Kent, 1963 June 25, Folder 8 (M), VII.A.10, Conservatory of Music Series A: Office of the Director Subseries 6: 1962-63 General Files H-R, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

the same letter, and a clear idea of its content is provided in their Board of Trustees minutes from September 26, 1963. The minutes state:

The Chairman read a letter he had received from President Kennedy mentioning his concern about the effect of the civil rights problem upon student enrollments in the fall, requesting public and private educational institutions to take all possible steps to adopt non-discriminatory admission policies and suggesting that progress reports be submitted to the United States Commissioner of Education.¹⁴⁴

William Marbury wrote to Commissioner Francis Keppel in response to Kennedy's letter, then forwarded this response and the original letter to Charles Kent, Director of the Conservatory. Marbury did not seem thrilled about receiving Kennedy's letter in the first place, and was not convinced that it applied in any way to Peabody. He responded to the letter by saying, "I do not think there is anything that the Peabody Conservatory can do about the dropout problem which we are not already doing. If a student has talent, we try to keep him. If he has none, then the sooner he stops wasting his time and ours, the better. I am sure that no social problems will be solved by producing bad musicians, white or colored." Marbury ended his letter to Keppel by saying, "Incidentally, we were the first private school in this community to integrate, and many of our most gifted students are Negroes."¹⁴⁵ The second half of this statement was certainly true, but the first half was not. While the Peabody Conservatory did not accept African-American students until 1949, and then on a case-by-case basis only, Frederick I. Scott enrolled at the Johns Hopkins University in February of 1945,¹⁴⁶ becoming the first African-American student

¹⁴⁴ New England Conservatory Board of Trustees minutes, 1963 September 26, 2.

¹⁴⁵ Letter from William L. Marbury letter to Francis Keppel, 1963 July 22, Folder 8 (M), VII.A.10, Conservatory of Music Series A: Office of the Director Subseries 6: 1962-63 General Files H-R, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹⁴⁶ "Frederick Scott," The History of African Americans at Johns Hopkins University, accessed 2018 September 13, <https://afam.nts.jhu.edu/people/Scott/scott.html>.

to enroll as an undergraduate at Johns Hopkins post-Reconstruction.¹⁴⁷ African-American students were accepted to non-degree programs at Johns Hopkins before this time. Loyola University also accepted African-American graduate students and evening class students as early as World War II,¹⁴⁸ and the first African-American undergraduate student enrolled in 1949, the same year Paul Brent enrolled at Peabody.¹⁴⁹ Marbury's claim that Peabody was the first to integrate in the Baltimore community demonstrates both ignorance and an eagerness to be seen as progressive and inclusive despite evidence to the contrary.

Director Charles Kent approved of Marbury's response, and also informed Marbury that he had taken a suggestion of his to heart and spoken with Leah Thorpe, Dean of the Preparatory, about hiring an African-American teacher.¹⁵⁰ A few weeks later, Commissioner Keppel replied to Marbury's letter, respectfully acknowledging that not all of President Kennedy's requests applied to Peabody as a specialized institution. He strongly encouraged the Board to consider the appeal regardless, and to look for ways they could help. He pointed out, "In many cases the influence of board members in other roles in the community is very important. ...You may also like to know that Baltimore is one of the cities participating in the President's special fund to provide summer counseling services to combat the dropout trend." Keppel also included in his civil but insistent

¹⁴⁷ In an email from 2018 August 28, James Stimpert, Senior Reference Archivist at The Johns Hopkins University, stated that Kelly Miller was the only African-American student to enroll in a full-time academic program at Johns Hopkins University before Frederick Scott. Miller enrolled in the 1880s.

¹⁴⁸ Nicholas Varga, *Baltimore's Loyola, Loyola's Baltimore 1851-1986* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1990), 357.

¹⁴⁹ Nick Alexopoulos, "Charles H. Dorsey, Jr., '57, Loyola's first student of color, led Maryland's legal aid bureau to national prominence," *Loyola Magazine*, 2016 February 18, accessed 2019 September 7, <http://magazine.loyola.edu/issue/alumni/11770/charles-h-dorsey-jr-57-loyolas-first-student-of-color-led-marylands-legal-aid-bureau-to-national-prominence>.

¹⁵⁰ Letter from Charles Kent to William Marbury, 1963 July 24, Folder 8 (M), VII.A.10, Conservatory of Music Series A: Office of the Director Subseries 6: 1962-63 General Files H-R, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

letter a list of reports he had received thus far from schools in response to the appeal that was sent out.¹⁵¹

Faculty Changes

When approached by Charles Kent about the possibility of hiring an African-American instructor to teach piano or voice at the Preparatory,¹⁵² Thorpe was resistant. She insisted that the precedent should first be set by the Conservatory because they had accepted African-American students long before the Preparatory, had more accepting faculty members, and had fewer difficult parents who might object. She wrote:

As to the hiring of a qualified Negro music teacher, it would be advisable if the Conservatory set the precedent, as it did for seven [sic] years before the Board of Trustees approved Negro student admission into the Prep. You have few “old Baltimoreans” left on your faculty, and college students’ parents would be unlikely to protest. At the Prep., we have many of the Maryland “old guard” teaching, and there would be stronger opposition, I think, on the part of parents of our children, too.

Coming from the North, I have no personal objection, and I believe eventually it should come to pass; but I do feel, strongly, that the College department should set the precedent. Then I believe both faculty and parents at the Prep. would accept it, if we could point to an established “custom” in the Conservatory.¹⁵³

Kent disregarded Thorpe’s concerns, claiming, “There are neither openings in the Advanced faculty nor qualified or available Negro teachers at that level. Since the Baltimore Public Schools are integrated, any objection from parents to a Negro teacher at that level should be overlooked.

¹⁵¹ Letter from Francis Keppel to William Marbury, 1963 August 15, Folder 2 (M), VII.A.14, Conservatory of Music Series A: Office of the Director Subseries 6: 1963-64 General Files M-R, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹⁵² Letter from Charles Kent to Leah Thorpe, 1963 July 16, Folder 5 (T), VII.A.11, Conservatory of Music Series A: Office of the Director Subseries 6 1962-63 General Files S-Z, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹⁵³ Letter from Leah Thorpe to Charles Kent, 1963 July 29, Folder 5 (T), VII.A.11, Conservatory of Music Series A: Office of the Director Subseries 6 1962-63 General Files S-Z, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

We can not have our policies determined by outside prejudice.”¹⁵⁴ He then said they would begin looking for a teacher, but no further record or results of this hiring process could be found. Kent’s insistence that outside prejudice must not determine the school’s policies was noble in theory, but it is doubtful that his personal conviction about this had much effect on the way the Institute continued to meet outside pressures and prejudice. Several years later, Mellasenah Morris applied for a teaching position at the Preparatory, but Leah Thorpe was not interested in engaging her. The next year, Thorpe left, and Morris was hired.¹⁵⁵

Also in the late 1960s, Peabody hired trumpet player Wilmer Wise, who became the first African-American faculty member at the Conservatory as well as the first African-American member of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO). Wise was a member of the BSO from 1965-1970¹⁵⁶ and taught at Peabody during his time in Baltimore. Unfortunately, no employment records for Wise could be found except for one mention of his last name in a list of faculty salaries from 1968.¹⁵⁷ It is uncertain how long Wise taught at Peabody or in what capacity, but he mentioned in a 2002 *Sounds and Stories* interview that he was surprised to learn that he was the first black faculty member at the school.¹⁵⁸

Summer Youth Project

In the summer of 1967, Peabody hosted high school students from across the city for a program called the Summer Youth Project. The project was conceived as an opportunity for

¹⁵⁴ Letter from Charles Kent to Leah Thorpe, 1963 August 2, Folder 5 (T), VII.A.11, Conservatory of Music Series A: Office of the Director Subseries 6 1962-63 General Files S-Z, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹⁵⁵ Morris, interview.

¹⁵⁶ Rebecca Cain, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Director of Operations, email to author, 2018 July 11.

¹⁵⁷ Peabody Institute Board of Trustees minutes, Vol. 10, Oct. 8 1964 thru June 13 1968, 1968 March 12, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹⁵⁸ *Sounds and Stories*, Wilmer Wise, p. 4. The complete interview can be found online at <http://musiclibrary.peabody.jhu.edu/c.php?g=678315&p=4781387>.

Peabody to provide high quality training for music students from low-income families, and it was funded by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).¹⁵⁹ Students were accepted based on recommendations from music teachers all over the city, and the majority of the students were African-American. The directors of the program stressed that making sure the students felt like part of the Peabody community was a top priority for this program. The opening speech, likely given by a member of Peabody's administration, made this clear in both its introduction and its conclusion:

Although I have welcomed you once this morning, I will repeat myself and say again that the administration, faculty and staff of Peabody Conservatory are very happy to see you all here. The P.C. is now your school. When you walked in the door you became a part of the history and traditions of a school which [is] over 100 years old...

As we begin this six week venture, all of us want you to realize one thing and that is that we are here because you are here. You as individuals are our primary concern for the next six weeks - any questions you have will be answered quickly, or the answers will be found.¹⁶⁰

Based on the documentation of the environment at Peabody for African-American students up to this point, it is reasonable to say this was the first time the administration made a real effort to engage students in a way that allowed them to feel included and valued. Students were apprehensive of the school and the faculty members at first, but opened up throughout the course.¹⁶¹ The program was a success, and although it could not happen again until 1971 because of funding, variations on the program continued after that through 1977. Many

¹⁵⁹ Interview about Summer Youth Project, May 1967, Special Youth Project 1967 Proposal Original and Final, VII.P.1, Conservatory of Music Summer Youth Project 1967, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹⁶⁰ Summer Youth Project Opening Speech, 1967, Special Youth Project 1967 Proposal Original and Final, VII.P.1, Conservatory of Music Summer Youth Project 1967, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹⁶¹ Summer Youth Project report, 1967 August 10, Folder 11 10 August 1967 (Special Youth Project 1967 Final Evaluation), VII.P.1, Conservatory of Music Summer Youth Project 1967, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

African-American teachers were also hired to teach in this program, and in an interesting turn of events, Paul A. Brent served as a professional consultant from the Baltimore City Public Schools for the 1971 session.¹⁶² Although the inclusive environment created by this program only existed for six weeks each summer, it was a brief recognition that Peabody must be intentional about listening to and creating space for African-American students.

Unrest in Baltimore

Less than a year after the first Summer Youth Project, however, Peabody found itself in the midst of the unrest following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, and Peabody continued to struggle with race-related issues. Although most of the damage from the riots and protests took place southeast and northwest of the Mount Vernon area, Peabody was still subject to the curfew, the presence of the National Guard, and the uncertainty that pervaded the city. The student body, however, was not particularly active or concerned about what was happening and why, and according to alumni who were there at the time, it wasn't really talked about. Mellasenah Morris, who was finishing her senior year and living outside of Mount Vernon, remembers that students were perturbed that their routine was interrupted and recitals had to be rescheduled. Meanwhile, she said, she was just thankful for her life. She recalls a similar lack of empathy among the Peabody community in most tragic situations, with the exception of the shootings at Kent State University in 1970.^{163,164} Paul Matlin, a white student who was also enrolled at the time, also remembers this sense of apathy and annoyance at

¹⁶² Paul Brent Contract, Summer 1971, Folder 6 (faculty contracts), VII.P.3, Conservatory of Music Summer Youth Project 1971, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

¹⁶³ Morris, interview.

¹⁶⁴ On May 4, 1970, four Kent State University students were fatally shot by members of the Ohio National Guard during a protest on campus. This sparked outrage and protests in universities nationwide.

Peabody, and said the Peabody community did not really talk about the riots.¹⁶⁵ There was no immediate public reaction to the unrest from the administration, but in the following Board of Trustees meeting on June 13, 1968, a statement addressing student dissent was created and approved.¹⁶⁶ The statement acknowledged the rights of students and faculty to peaceful protest and free speech, and condemned any illegal or violent acts, as well as any disruption to classes or other school activities.¹⁶⁷ Both Morris and Matlin said that the statement was never distributed or shared with the student body, or at least that they were never aware of it. It seems as though its purpose was to cover all the bases for the school, but it had no direct influence on the student body.

Fifty Years Later

We find ourselves now over fifty years removed from the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the 1968 unrest in Baltimore, but there are many parallels from recent years to incidents and comments that were documented in the archives decades ago. Although a lot happened at Peabody between 1968 and 2018, and there are many more untold stories, this fifty year span makes these parallels all the more poignant. Especially at a time when diversity and inclusion are at the forefront of conversations and initiatives in the classical music community, it is crucial to examine the effectiveness of these initiatives in truly creating a safe and just environment for African-American musicians.

¹⁶⁵ Paul Matlin, interview with the author, 2018 July 3.

¹⁶⁶ Peabody Institute Board of Trustees minutes, 1968 June 13, Minutes Vol. 10, October 8 1964 thru June 13 1968, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 2-3.

¹⁶⁷ The full statement can be read in Appendix 4.

In 2015, after the murder of Freddie Gray and the Baltimore Uprising,¹⁶⁸ the majority of Peabody's student body remained silent and indifferent about what was going on in the city. A small group of students paid attention, participated in protests, and engaged with what was happening, and the Peabody administration made a little bit more of an effort to support students in processing the Uprising than they did in 1968. While this was an improvement from what happened nearly fifty years before, in both instances the silence and indifference were staggering. When efforts to build community and talk about difficult issues only happen after a tragedy, it is impossible to create an environment that truly supports students of color.

In 2017, a prominent guest conductor who was visiting Peabody ended a Peabody Symphony Orchestra concert by addressing the audience and talking about the bond that music creates between people. He told them that we as musicians don't see gender, race, or nationality, because we enjoy that bond and only care about making music together and preserving our cultural heritage. He also looked across a room with a large majority of white and Asian students and commented on the diversity of the student body. These comments and others like them are similar to a sentiment shared by Board member R.E. Lee Taylor in 1949 when responding with his opinion on Paul Brent's admission to Peabody. "From my knowledge of musicians I doubt whether there are any such objections on the part of the more adult pupils or any of the members of the faculty. Music seems to be a little bit more international and free of prejudices than more of the other things taught in our schools."¹⁶⁹ While this may in some cases be true, both Taylor's

¹⁶⁸ Freddie Gray was murdered by Baltimore Police in April of 2015. Arrested on April 12, 2015, he received spinal cord injuries while in police custody and later died on April 19, 2015. Following his death, protests took place across Baltimore, a curfew was set, and the National Guard was called in. This period is now known as the Baltimore Uprising.

¹⁶⁹ Letter from R.E. Lee Taylor to William L. Marbury, 1949 July 12, Wm. L. Marbury 1949 July-Dec Folder 1, Box 27, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees records PIRG.02 Series C: Officers, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The John Hopkins University.

comment in 1949 and the guest conductor's statement in 2017 claim a sense of unity and lack of racial discrimination in the classical music community when neither of those things are true for African-American students in a primarily white and Asian student body.

A recent Peabody Magazine publication announced the new "Blue Ribbon Scholarship program, in which Peabody is working with partner high schools to identify strong underrepresented minority students who, if admitted, will receive scholarships to attend Peabody."¹⁷⁰ This program is a very positive step, but the language used here - "strong" and "if admitted" - is eerily similar to Reginald Stewart's qualification in 1949 that Paul Brent would be accepted "only if, upon examination, he proves to be extremely talented." While there is nothing inherently wrong with these words, they would never be used in reference to a white or Asian student, because society does not feel the need to qualify their talent or achievements.

In sharing these parallels, my intent is not to criticize the efforts being made at Peabody to move forward in the area of diversity. In recent years, the administration has taken intentional steps towards diversifying the Peabody community, creating the "Peabody Diversity Pathway Task Force,"¹⁷¹ investing in programs for young underrepresented minority musicians,¹⁷² and boasting in the 2019-2020 school year of Peabody's most diverse student and faculty body.¹⁷³ But there has always been a disconnect between programs, initiatives, and statements from the administration and the day-to-day experiences of African-American students at Peabody; in

¹⁷⁰ Christen Brownlee, "Embracing Diversity," *Peabody Magazine Vol. 12, No. 2*, Spring 2018, 24.

¹⁷¹ "Task Forces," The Breakthrough Plan, Our Vision, Explore Peabody, Johns Hopkins Peabody Institute, accessed 2019 September 8, <https://peabody.jhu.edu/explore-peabody/our-vision/breakthrough-plan/task-forces/>.

¹⁷² "Pathways to Peabody," In Our Community, Explore Peabody, Johns Hopkins Peabody Institute, accessed 2019 September 8, <https://peabody.jhu.edu/explore-peabody/community-engagement/pathways/>.

¹⁷³ In the 2019-20 school year, it is expected that underrepresented minority students will make up nearly 15% of the student body and underrepresented minority faculty members will make up 11% of the faculty body. "Diversity," The Breakthrough Plan, Our Vision, Explore Peabody, Johns Hopkins Peabody Institute, 2019 June, accessed 2019 September 8, <https://peabody.jhu.edu/explore-peabody/our-vision/breakthrough-plan/>.

many ways, the culture on campus today is similar to much of what is recorded in archival material from the past seventy years. Amidst efforts like the ones mentioned above, the stories of African-American students who have been ignored, kept from opportunities, carded when walking on campus, kicked out of practice rooms, and treated as inferiors by other students, faculty, and administrators are still prevalent. The process of integration may have begun in 1949, but to say that Peabody - or any other music conservatory in America, for that matter - is truly integrated, in the sense of equal representation or a positive environment for people of color, is far from the truth. Shirley Hennigan Carter's sense in 1955 that perhaps she did not quite belong at Peabody is all too familiar for African-American students nearly sixty-five years later. In light of this knowledge, a shift of focus must take place: the Peabody community must acknowledge that initiatives are not enough to change a toxic culture and begin to prioritize listening to black students, alumni, and faculty.

The three parallels above are examples from my own observations of the culture at Peabody in comparison with the documents I have found in the archives. The story I am telling, however, is not my own, and black students at Peabody have been speaking about their experiences for years only to be ignored, shut down, or reprimanded. In conversations during the Fall 2018 semester, current students and Black Student Union Board members Jada Campbell, Alex D'Amico, Rahel Lulseged, and Yasmeen Richards shared countless stories of racism they and other black students and faculty have encountered at Peabody. Many of the things they experience on a day-to-day basis are very similar to the stories shared by alumni from the 1950s and 1960s. The promotion and prioritization of diversity in any institution is an important step,

but it often creates an appearance of change when much more needs to be addressed before things really improve for African-American people in historically white institutions.

Jada Campbell (BM/BS 2021), who is a double degree student in Piano Performance and Computer Science, related a story shared by a Peabody faculty member about an African-American student who was studying at Peabody in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Running late to his lesson, he was running towards Peabody with his violin in an attempt to arrive on time. Right outside of Peabody, Baltimore Police saw him and, assuming he had stolen the violin, stopped him and pushed him to the ground. Thirty years later, blatant racial profiling is no less of an issue. Based on these interviews and other personal conversations, it seems that most African-American students at Peabody have been questioned when entering the school, practicing, or going about their daily life. The stories are numerous, and Campbell shared one such story from the 2017-2018 school year. She was running through Peabody's Arcade to make it to her piano lesson on time, when a member of Peabody's security approached her, saying, "Stop, I need to see your ID." Campbell let the security guard know she was running late to a lesson, but the guard insisted and she provided her ID. After seeing that Campbell was a student, the security guard responded, "Oh, that's fine. I just wanted to make sure you weren't running from someone." Campbell asked, "What? Like running from the police or something?" and was answered with silence as the security guard walked away. Campbell added, "It may seem like a minor inconvenience, like if you have your ID just show it to them. But it's bad because it's just one of those things that makes our job very hard. It makes you feel like, well, if they don't think I belong here then I don't think I belong here." This kind of behavior by Peabody security is

unacceptable, and there is a strong disconnect between incidents like these and the administration's promotion of initiatives that supposedly support diversity and inclusion.

While there has been a concerted and successful effort to recruit and accept more African-American students and hire more African-American faculty members, black students at Peabody feel they have little access to administration and that they are not acknowledged or heard when speaking out about experiences like the one mentioned above. As Viola Performance major Alex D'Amico (BM 2019) pointed out, by the time reported incidents climb the ladder to top administrators, the story has likely changed or been downplayed. In April 2019, D'Amico and other black students and alumni worked to have an article on the topic of discrimination at Peabody published in the *Johns Hopkins News-Letter*.¹⁷⁴ The article reports discrimination particularly from the Student Affairs Office, and addresses many of the issues that accompany the lack of an appropriate process for reporting discrimination within the school. Without such a process, it is impractical to think that much can change about African-American students' daily experiences at Peabody.

In addition to the difficulty of communication with staff and administration, D'Amico said, even the logistics of being a student at Peabody can be difficult. Many forms, requirements, and other resources are tailored towards white students, oftentimes forcing black students to provide more documentation or paperwork. D'Amico links this to a lack of understanding that these requirements disproportionately affect African-American students. In addition to this, there are no resources at Peabody specifically for black students - no scholarships, no accessible information about jobs or fellowships for underrepresented minorities, no active support of the

¹⁷⁴ Sabrina Abrams, "Peabody's black students report discrimination," *The Johns Hopkins News-Letter*, 2019 April 25, <https://www.jhunewsletter.com/article/2019/04/peabodys-black-students-report-discrimination>, accessed 2019 September 7.

BSU, and little direct mentorship with black faculty or alumni. The BSU had a very successful year in 2018-2019, with regular meetings and many new members, but this was thanks to the work of black students, with little to no outside support. BSU Board members even had to fight for access to a room to meet in, having been assigned to a public lounge. “I think the overall picture,” Campbell said, “is that Peabody now is just, nothing’s really changed. We’re trying, but it’s all on ourselves.”

The difficulties black students face, however, go beyond logistics and administrative support. Oftentimes students, faculty, and other members of the Peabody community are ignorant and complacent when it comes to the experiences of African-American students. In the past several years, there have been incidents ranging from a student saying the N-word and not being reported correctly to racist comments muttered during an orchestra rehearsal. In addition to such overt racist behavior, ignorance and unconscious bias from other students and faculty affect African-American students every day. Cello Performance major Rahel Lulseged (BM 2021) used the example of language choice in everyday conversation. “Environment-wise, the language that the students, even teachers, faculty, choose to use - like words like ghetto, and like ratchet - or the way that other students will be like, ‘Oh we don’t like Baltimore because it’s ghetto...’ And it’s like, what do you mean by ghetto? We know. It’s like all the little things that make you uncomfortable.” Students are also complacent when it comes to more blatantly racist situations, not calling out colleagues or acknowledging when something offensive is said or done. This lack of support leaves African-American students on their own, having to choose between constantly speaking up for themselves or else living with this unhealthy culture and seeing no improvement. Both of these options are emotionally and mentally exhausting.

Many faculty members are not helping the situation, allowing this kind of behavior from students and sometimes contributing to it themselves. As Horn Performance major Yasmeen Richards (MM 2019) said, “Part of the responsibility lies with their teacher to be able to say, ‘That’s not acceptable in my studio. So you can play the trombone, but you can’t be *here* playing the trombone coming with that kind of stuff.’ And if a lot of the teachers here don’t do that, then it’s going to attract students that don’t want a bunch of black people in their studio.” Other times, faculty simply do not update class content or acknowledge the racist history of Western classical music, ignoring the fact that this directly excludes many of the students they are teaching. Most of the time, this indifference from faculty is due to a lack of understanding of what black students are experiencing on a day-to-day basis and the unique challenges they encounter at Peabody. It is well worth acknowledging that this is exactly what Bill Myers said of his experience with faculty members during his time at Peabody in the late 1950s.

All of this raises many questions about the effectiveness of diversity initiatives that focus primarily on increasing the percentage of minority groups in the student and faculty body without careful attention to the culture on campus. The members of the BSU Board stressed that it is both important and exciting that there are increasingly more African-American students and faculty in the Peabody community. But as Richards emphasized, it is not a complete solution: “You’re just adding more black people to the problem...to fix it ourselves!” Diversifying a community without actively listening to and addressing the needs of minority groups within that community often means neglecting larger problems that need to be fixed before any real change can happen.

Richards added that with increasing numbers and little effort to change an environment that is both historically and currently racist, it feels like diversity initiatives in the classical music world are happening just because it is the popular thing to do. She says:

I also think historically - even from a music historian/music theorist standpoint - classical music pretty much reached its peak around the 1920s, 1915, which is when jazz came around. And jazz is essentially what saved classical music, because they introduced a whole other new kind of thing. And I almost feel like, jazz being created by black people, black people are the ones that saved classical music...there was like Strauss and then there was Mahler and no one knew what to do, and then they started implementing jazz in their stuff, and they essentially used blackness to save classical music and I feel like that is exactly what they're doing now.

Making an effort to include more African-American musicians and dancers solely for the survival of our art can easily become a basic promotional or marketing tactic without any consideration for the actual people involved. Without acknowledging and addressing the challenges African-American students and faculty experience at Peabody, efforts to increase diversity will not change an environment that has been hostile for over 150 years.

All of this adds up to create a situation that is neither healthy nor conducive to learning for African-American students. Oftentimes, being in a space that is primarily white and Asian forces black students to “act white” in order to succeed and be respected, and this again directly links back to Bill Myers’ sentiments about his time at Peabody in the late 1950s. Richards expanded on the effects of this need to switch gears:

...what ends up happening is it's kind of crazy-making, because you end up having to kind of be two different people. And sometimes it feels like you kind of have to split two different sides of yourself between the black person and the french horn player, the black person and the cellist. So when you're around your cello people, who usually aren't black or whatever, you have to be a certain way...and then you get around black people and it's like ‘Ahh I get to be myself!’ And that's psychotic! Like nobody else has to do that!

Like all Peabody students, African-American students enroll at Peabody to hone their craft and grow as artists, but they are met with challenges that most other students never have to consider. In addition to speaking up for themselves, fighting to be heard, and dealing with students and faculty who are unaware and ignorant of their own racism, black students carry the constant weight of feeling the need to be a different person altogether. Dealing with all of this is mentally unhealthy and has caused many black students to leave Peabody, unable to complete their degrees in such a toxic culture. The similarity between issues current Peabody students are experiencing and the stories of alumni who attended fifty and sixty years ago is striking. As Richards points out, “this time they just don’t have to have a law that says, ‘Black kids can’t go to Peabody.’ They don’t even have to cause it’s such a toxic circle of racism, we’ll take ourselves out of the running.”

There is one primary difference between the stories of alumni and current students. Several alumni shared stories of fellow students standing up for them when they were met with racism at Peabody. Students speaking up for Bill Myers and Gloria Chester in the music education field trip incident, Myrtle Mack Sutton’s friends walking out of a restaurant that denied her food, and students and a guest artist being arrested rather than leaving when Karl Porter was denied service – these instances may have been few and far between, but they did happen. In contrast to this, current African-American students feel they are rarely supported by their colleagues, typically receiving, at the most, sympathy with no action.

To expect any student to deal with these challenges and still have the emotional, mental, and physical energy to invest in their studies is unrealistic and problematic. Even when racist incidents are not brought up or reported, they still happen and it is left entirely to

African-American students to draw attention or raise awareness. Without reinforcement and support, it is easy to second-guess and question whether something racist really happened, or assume you did something wrong. Richards explained, “Racism is one of those things that if somebody literally doesn’t say it, and no one else is experiencing it, you’re just going to feel like it’s you, or like you’re crazy the entire time, at least speaking personally. If you’re the only black person in the situation.” This means for every instance an African-American student has the time and emotional energy to address a situation, there are probably dozens of situations that have been left or ignored. Richards added, “Black people don’t want race problems! This doesn’t make us happy to like have to go through, so if we’re saying it, we’ve already tried to suppress it. We’ve already tried to ignore it and we can’t take it.” Right now, any improvement that is happening for black students on campus is the result of their own hard work. This is unhealthy and unsustainable, leaving them with the responsibility of being full-time students while also creating opportunities for an all-black space through the BSU, calling out racism, and dealing with the psychological trauma of living and working in an environment that requires them to change who they are in order to be successful.

In the context of Peabody’s participation in the racism, segregation, and discrimination that has dominated classical music for hundreds of years, it is even clearer that what black students have to deal with is deeply rooted in our culture as a whole. We must remember that the appearance of change and a message of inclusion does not erase the toxic culture that is rooted in a long history of exclusion. It is the responsibility of the Peabody community to learn, listen, and actively make space for black voices at Peabody and in the classical music community at large. This means calling out other members of the community, actively listening to black students,

working to make tangible changes at Peabody, and not encroaching on black spaces. The effort to accept more African-American students and hire more African-American faculty members is a step in this process, but it may not be the most important part. Where we are failing as a community is in making an effort to recognize and address the challenges black students face once they arrive at Peabody.

The time period covered in this document includes the years 1923-1968, in addition to the stories of students fifty years later in 2018. This is only a small percentage of Peabody's life and an even smaller percentage of the years black artists have been dealing with racial injustice. There are many more stories that have been erased, forgotten, or have not yet been told, and this document is far from being a complete history. This is only a starting point for learning about the work that needs to be done at Peabody, and with this knowledge comes a responsibility to invest in changing the culture that has resulted from Peabody's history of exclusion.

Appendix 1

Responses from the Board of Trustees to William L. Marbury concerning Paul Brent's application to the Peabody Conservatory.

Summer, 1949

Wm. L. Marbury 1949 July-Dec Folder 1, Box 27, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees records, PIRG.02 Series C: Officers, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

Henry H. Callard

July 12, 1949

Dear Bill:

My feeling concerning the question of the admission of negroes to the Advanced Department of the Conservatory is very clearly that there should be no racial barrier and that their applications should be considered on their merit. If this boy qualifies according to Mr. Stewart's standards, I feel that he should be admitted. I recognize that questions of this kind are practical ones that cannot be settled on an idealistic basis. But I think the time has come when the Conservatory should make this change in its practices along with the evolutionary development which is taking place in the country.

I have thought a great deal about this matter, and I hope very much that the change can be accomplished without publicity and self-consciousness, though I know that this is often not possible, and we must be prepared for whatever comes.

Sincerely yours,
Henry H. Callard
Headmaster [The Gilman Country School]

R.E. Lee Taylor

July 12, 1949

Dear Bill:

I have yours of the 8th, and am writing to say that I feel that the time has come for the Peabody to admit negro students to the higher classes at the Peabody, provided they have the necessary talent.

However, I think that this is a question that is always full of dynamite, and before acting I believe we should sound out some of the more responsible teachers and pupils. I do not think that the Board should get itself into the position of having to force anything of this kind on the student body if it turns out that they have serious objections.

From my knowledge of musicians I doubt whether there are any such objections on the part of the more adult pupils or any of the members of the faculty. Music seems to be a little bit more international and free of prejudices than more of the other things taught in our schools.

To repeat: my only suggestion is that we sound out the student body before we go too far or too fast.

Yours sincerely,
R.E. Lee Taylor

Charles R. Austrian
July 19, 1949

Dear Mr. Marbury, –

Your letter of July 8th concerning the problem raised anew by the application of Mr. Paul A. Brent for admission as a student to the Peabody Conservatory is acknowledged herewith.

It is my considered judgment that educational institutions of this State can no longer evade the issue of accepting a properly qualified candidate regardless of race. If Mr. Brent is able to satisfy Mr. Stewart as to his qualifications, it seems to me that the Trustees would perforce be bound to accept his judgment.

Sincerely,
Charles R. Austrian

Louise J. Cooper
July 19, 1949

My dear Mr. Marbury –

Have read your letter carefully and agree with you. If Paul A. Brent is qualified for admission to study in the advanced department of the Peabody Conservatory he should be accepted. Being in Maine I have had no opportunity to connect with any Trustee. Hall Pleasants arrives tomorrow and I shall be glad to look it over with him. I hope you and Natalie and the children have a fine vacation.

Sincerely Yours
Louise J. Cooper
July 19 - 1949
Yorkshire Inn
York Harbor, Maine

Harris E. Kirk
July 25, 1949

Dear Mr. Marbury –

Replying to your letter of July 22nd [illegible] to say that I approve of the admission of the negro student into the Conservatory provided he can meet the standards set forth in your letter.

Sincerely yours
Harris E. Kirk

Thomas B. Butler
July 25, 1949

Dear Bill:

I have your letter of July 22nd in regard to the application by Paul A. Brent for admission to the Peabody Conservatory of Music.

This is to confirm my telephone conversation with you this morning advising that I concur in the opinion of the Conservatory Committee that Brent should be admitted if he is qualified to pursue a course of study at the Conservatory.

Sincerely Yours,
Thomas B. Butler

J. Hall Pleasants
July 27, 1949

Dear Bill

I vote reluctantly to admit Brent as a student in the advanced department of the Peabody Conservatory of course subject to Mr. Stewart finding him to be “extremely talented”. That Mayor Jackson backs him counts nothing with me. I have talked the matter over with Mrs. Cooper who is here at York Harbor, and also with Gilman Paul before I left, and as you and they feel that he should be admitted, I acquiesce. I do not think however, that a public announcement of a policy to admit negroes should be made until there has been a full discussion of the subject at a board meeting.

I feel that there is an hysterical element in the way the negro question, especially in its racial aspects, is being rushed at the present time, and that under the guise of racial equality, things are going too fast. Had public opinion been allowed to develop more slowly there would be less friction in a community like Baltimore. You and I both know, that apart from the negroes themselves, where most of the pressure now comes from.

Yours sincerely,
J. Hall Pleasants

F. Grainger Marburg
August 1, 1949

Dear Bill,

Under the conditions as outlined in your letter of July 22nd, I am entirely in accord with the recommendation of the Conservatory Committee to admit Paul A. Brent, a Negro, to the Advanced Department.

The delay in replying to your letter of July 22nd was occasioned by my absence on vacation, and I sincerely hope that you have gone ahead with the matter since you say that Mr. Stewart was anxious for an early decision.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,
F. Grainger Marburg

J. Hambleton Ober
August 2, 1949

Dear Billy -

I am sorry to have been so slow in answering your letter but we were on a trip to the White Mountain in New Hampshire and no mail was forwarded.

At first I was inclined to disagree with you and the others about the advisability of admitting a negro student to the Conservatory. However after giving further consideration to this problem I find that I am in agreement with you provided it is not used to set a precedent but that each future case will be decided upon its merits.

It seems to me that a line, perhaps a fine one, can be drawn between other activities of the Conservatory and the Advance [sic] Department which requires individual instruction rather than work in the Classroom.

We have been thinking of all you in [illegible] but not with the same sympathy as ordinarily because the heat has been pretty bad up here and the fields are burned to a crisp with little or no rain for the past two months and more. Charlotte sends her love to Natalie.

Sincerely,
Hambleton

Douglas Gordon
August 2, 1949

Dear Billie:

I received word yesterday that you would like to know the opinion of the Peabody board members on the question of admitting a colored student to the Conservatory.

It seems to me that it would be a great mistake to change the present policy. In our climate the presence of negroes can to some be extremely offensive. Notwithstanding this, to others their presence together with whites at school, etc., is [illegible] in the South going to lead to such a mixed race as can see [sic] in Sicily or Brazil, — not a very edifying spectacle.

The effect upon our enrollment might be disastrous. At a time when it is probably going to fall for a while, due to less abundant money in parents' hands, our principal competitors, — our own graduates teaching music —, may well take away a large part of our own enrollment. When the Board of St. John's College decided not to accept a negro applicant, and the Executive Committee caused him to be accepted, a drive for funds which was contemplated had to be given up for want of Alumni support.

If the applicant for the Conservatory is really of outstanding talent, the Peabody should give him financial aid enabling him to study at the Conservatory in Boston, which is not vexed with the problem in question.

Sincerely yours,
Douglas Gordon

Appendix 2

Letter from Eugene D. Byrd to Reginald Stewart

March 24, 1953

Folder 5, Box 25, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library,
Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University.

Dear Doctor Stewart:

The article appearing in Sunday's Sunpaper "Music Students Visit Peabody," along with another incident recently occurring at the Conservatory has prompted me to write you. "Accompanied by their parents and teachers, they flocked to the institution primarily from small towns to gain acquaintance with the life and opportunities of a higher musical education not available in their own communities," as stated in the article. Certainly, in extending this opportunity is in keeping with our education system, which might be considered the first line of defense in America.

The other incident is the direct antithesis of the above commendable condition. Of course, I am aware of the rules and regulations confronting an individual who assumes the leadership of a well-established institution such as the one you head. Nevertheless, heads of institutions can bring with them certain basic convictions that may be strong enough to augment or even replace established policies, when these convictions work in the best interest of the institution.

I discuss this with you, at the level of accepting the fact, that the Conservatory is a cultural center dedicated to the advancement in the artistry of musical endeavor. As such, it should never become a partner in the perpetuation of signs and symptoms of decayed minds or antiquated mores and customs. Especially, in a society attempting to establish itself as the world leader. Culture institutions in their efforts, and by their actions, more than by their words, should transcend all racial and religious intolerances. They should, more than ever in this hour of worldwide strife, for democracy sake alone, dedicate themselves to the task of building stronger bulwarks to turn the tide of communism.

The knowledge gained from the exploding Atom Bombs on the flats of Yucca or over the Atoll of Bikini, and all the other ingenious [sic], savage methods to destroy man's body, will do little or nothing in destroying man's mind or mending man's relationships.

I believe, as perhaps you and many of your associates, in the First Commandment of God and, the Second liken into it. We prove our lack of courage when we agree that a system is wrong but, lay the blame on the probable reaction of people who might object.

Millions of us spent a few years back attempting to destroy the Nazi myth of Aryan-supremacy. Those who died rest in peace having made the supreme sacrifice for this victory. Those of us who returned are tortured by the thoughts that our comrades died in vain. We betray that cause unless organizations such as yours become buddies in the fight.

The father of this innocent little victim, age about 12 years, is serving this great country of ours, ready to put his all at the altar of sacrifice. Perhaps, giving organizations such as yours more time to pierce the sides of justice. For me to have done less than champion the cause of this little girl, would make me unworthy to enjoy God's goodness upon the just as well as the unjust.

More than that, the psychological injury your organization inflicted upon that refined young mother when you announced your policy to her after assuring both she and her daughter of the talent and musical background of the daughter; the anticipated joy and high expectations of such a wholesome environment must have cut deeper into the wounds when you gave this mother the task of telling her loved one of your narrow-minded policy. Your actions bespeak the cruelty of callous Roman Emperors throwing Christians to the hungry lions for their entertainments.

The challenge is yours to accept now, if you believe in real democracy and if you accept the fact that America represents a Christian Nation. It is for us, the living, in this very hour by our actions, to make democracy live.

Your disqualification of that little girl, after she had proven her ability by your standards, because of her ethnic background rather than the lack of ability was a most disgraceful act for any organization, especially one dedicated to the art of music.

You may not reason as I do, however, "he who will not reason is a bigot; he who cannot is a fool; and he who dares not is a slave."

Very truly yours,
Eugene D. Byrd, D.D.S.

Appendix 3

Report from Reginald Stewart to the Board of Trustees

June 14, 1954

Folder 8, Box 24, Peabody Institute Board of Trustees Records, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 2.

Admission of Negroes

Segregation in the public schools of Baltimore will end this fall, and I believe that our future policy regarding the admission of negroes must be determined. Until now the Conservatory has admitted negroes only in the Advanced Department and upon meeting the entrance requirements for the degree course. Apparently, anticipating a more liberal policy on the part of the Conservatory two negro girl Prep students have applied for admission to the Summer School. At the same time Dr. Corwin Taylor, supervisor of instrumental music in the public schools of Baltimore, has approached us regarding the accommodation of negro students on the Prep level who have been deprived of musical instruction facilities since the collapse of the Institute of Musical Art a year or so ago. The problem has become rather pressing for Doctor Taylor since, in addition to the general need for negro musical instruction, there is the question of providing for the winners of the Deiches Scholarships in music (made available through the public schools) some of whom are negro. Doctor Taylor has also asked us to consider a plan for the development of the Peabody in certain sections of the city where students (both white and colored) of the public schools might receive instruction in orchestral instruments and with tuition rates somewhat lower than those charged at our branches in Towson, Dundalk and Glen Burnie. As this proposal seemed to be risky, financially, to the Conservatory we have offered a counter-proposal which is presently being considered by the Board of Education. This proposal would establish Saturday Morning Music Centers using high school buildings and thus saving the expense of renting special accommodations. It also envisions supplying junior teachers (in instrumental instruction only, not in voice or piano), at a tuition rate of \$2.00 per half-hour lesson instead of \$2.75 which is charged at the regular Peabody branches. Should these Saturday Morning Centers develop they would, of course, be available in the negro as well as the white sections of the city and would, therefore, to some degree at least, satisfy the need for music instruction among the colored people.

Two more factors must be considered in determining our policy regarding the admission of negroes into the Preparatory Department. The first is that on Saturday mornings, when most students would request music lessons, we are running at peak load as far as facilities are concerned, and we would of necessity have to deny many requests for lessons on that day. Whether or not this might be misinterpreted by colored parents is an open question. The second

factor is that a regular branch, open to white and colored people (and in which all instruments, including piano and voice, would be taught) might be opened in a negro section of the city. However, although this might relieve the burden on the main building, it would in no way solve the question of segregation, and the probability is that many parents would indicate a preference for the main building.

There is no way of knowing how many negroes would apply for admission if all barriers were removed. In the Manhattan School of Music in New York there are 80 out of a total enrollment of 641.*

My recommendation is (1) to continue our present policy as far as the Advanced and Preparatory Departments are concerned; (2) to accept the application of the two negro students in the Summer School and (3) to move cautiously on any other changes. I would favor the opening of the Saturday Music Centers in both white and colored neighborhoods, but I would oppose, at present, the development of a branch in a negro section of the city.

*According to the New York Public Library Information Service, the negro population in New York is 1,450,000 out of a total of 8,500,000. In Baltimore the negro population is 270,000 out of almost 1,000,000.

Appendix 4

Statement from the Board of Trustees on student dissent

June 13, 1968

Minutes Vol. 10, October 8 1964 thru June 13 1968, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, 2-3.

II. Student Dissent

In this age of student protest and dissent, it is imperative that the Trustees and the Administration set forth a firm policy regarding this matter. The following policy statement was approved by the Conservatory Committee at its April 20, 1968 meeting:

In recognition that demonstrations and protests with regard to currently existing political and social conditions in the United States and throughout the world have arisen, and will probably continue to arise as long as such conditions prevail, the Board of Trustees and the Administration of the Peabody Institute adopt the following statement of policy:

1. The right of students and of members of the faculty to free speech, including the right of dissent and the right to express their convictions through peaceful demonstration, is recognized and acknowledged.
2. Law and order prevail in a community because the citizens thereof, in recognition of their duty, insist on law and order. The responsibility for preservation of law and order within the community of the Peabody, and in connection with the teaching and performing programs of the Conservatory, rests equally on the Trustees, the Administration, the faculty and the students.
3. It is the duty of the faculty and the students to exercise their rights within the framework of law and order, and at all times to insist upon preservation of the same.
4. The Trustees and Administration will not permit the disruption or suspension of any part of the programs of the Conservatory by acts of violence, obstruction or coercion.

Digital Appendix

An online exhibit/digital appendix can be found at

<https://exhibits.library.jhu.edu/exhibits/show/a-message-of-inclusion>.

Credits and Acknowledgments

Author/Curator

Sarah Thomas is a violinist, teacher, and writer based in Baltimore, MD. She received both Bachelor and Master of Music Degrees from the Peabody Conservatory, completing her studies in 2019. This project was made possible by the Hugh Hawkins Research Fellowships for the Study of Hopkins History, of which Thomas was a recipient in 2018. For questions regarding this research, contact her at sarahthomas479@gmail.com.

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To Debbie Kennison, thank you for your time, kindness, and investment in connecting me with the incredible alumni who took part in this project. You have a beautiful and unique ability to bring people together in every situation.

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To those who provided information and resources outside of the Sheridan Libraries' database – Barbara Benedett (Curtis Institute of Music), Rebecca Cain (Baltimore Symphony Orchestra), David Peter Coppen and Vincent Lenti (Eastman School of Music), Sandra Glascock (Maryland Historical Society), Deborah Harner (Goucher College), Louisa Hoffman (Oberlin College), Kevin McLaughlin (Cleveland Institute of Music), Christina Meninger (Loyola-Notre Dame Library), Maryalice Perrin-Mohr (New England Conservatory), and Jenny Swadosh (The New School) – thank you for taking the time to answer questions and provide resources that allowed me to see the larger context surrounding Peabody's history. Without your help, it would have been impossible to place my research within an accurate and meaningful framework.

To all my friends (you know who you are), and especially my roommates, thank you for letting me talk your ears off about this project, reading drafts (shoutout to Bronwyn and Emilie for reading the entire paper out loud to me!), and offering the moral support that kept me going over the last year and a half.