



150 Years of Educational Excellence

Existing Beyond the Veil: Celebrating Fisk's Third Jubilee

1866-2016

Friday, February 12, 2016

Avon Williams Campus, TSU

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| 8:30 AM | Registration Begins | |
| 9:00 AM | Welcome and Opening Remarks | <i>Mr. Jim Forkum</i> , Chair, Metropolitan Historical Commission
<i>Mrs. Linda T. Wynn</i> , Conference Co-Chair |
| 9:20 AM | A Historical Overview Of Fisk University Galleries | <i>Mr. Jamaal Sheets</i> , Adjunct Assistant Professor of Art, Department of Arts and Languages and Director of the Fisk Art Galleries, Fisk University |
| 9:45 AM | <i>The Founding of Fisk University, One of America's Great Institutions of Higher Learning</i> | <i>Dr. Reavis L. Mitchell, Jr.</i>
Dean, School of Humanities and Behavioral Social Science & Professor of History; Department of History and Political Science, Fisk University |
| 10:10 AM | <i>Some Special Resources for Research in African American History at Fisk University</i> | <i>Dr. Jessie C. Smith</i>
Dean of the Library and Camille Cosby Distinguished Chair in the Humanities, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Fisk University |
| 10:30 AM | Break | |
| 10:50 AM | <i>The Evolution of Feminist Thought in the Works of W.E.B. Du Bois</i> | <i>Linda T. Wynn, M.S., M. P. A.</i>
Assistant Director for State Programs, Tennessee Historical Commission & Faculty Member, Department of History and Political Science, Fisk University |
| 11:10 AM | Remarks | <i>Dr. Glenda Baskin Glover</i> , President, Tennessee State University
<i>Mr. Lonnell Matthews</i> , Director, Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods and Community Engagement |

Tennessee State University College of Liberal Arts and Metropolitan Nashville Historical Commission

- 11:30 AM ***A Concert of Spirituals*** Fisk Jubilee Singers
 Paul T. Kwami, D.M.A. Director
- 12:00 PM Lunch
- 1:30 PM ***James Weldon Johnson at Fisk*** *Dr. Don Cusic, Curb Professor of Music Industry History, Belmont University*
- 1:50 PM ***So-"Fisk"-ticated Ladies and Gentlemen: Highlights of the Fisk Tradition in Instrumental Music*** *Mr. Fletcher Moon, Associate Professor and Head Reference Librarian, Brown-Daniel Library, Tennessee State University*
- 2:20 ***A Medley of Sound*** The Three Fisk Tenors
 Gwendolyn Brown, Director
 Artist in Residence, Voice Division Music Discipline, Fisk University
- 3:00 PM ***Fisk and Africa: A Tenuous Connection and Intermittent Commitment, 1866-2012*** *Dr. James Quirin, Professor of History, Department of History & Political Science, Fisk University*
- 3:30 PM *Closing Remarks* *Dr. Reavis Mitchell, Conference Co-Chair*

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Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee



Juliette Derricotte (1897 - 1931)

Juliette Aline Derricotte was born in Athens, Georgia, on April 1, 1897, the fifth of nine children. Her parents were Isaac and Laura Hardwick Derricotte, an interracial couple. Her African American father was a cobbler and her mother of European descent was a seamstress. Reared in the South, Derricotte soon became cognizant of the region's mores and values of racial segregation. Racial exclusivity shattered Juliette Derricotte's aspirations of attending the Lucy Cobb Institute in Athens. Although she was disappointed at limitations being placed upon her because of her race, the experience proved critical to fashioning her resolve to combat discrimination. It fashioned her perception of the world and her desire to change people's racial predispositions.

After completing her education in the public schools of Atlanta, Derricotte attended the historically black Talladega College in Alabama, where all of the teachers were white. At Talladega she became a popular student and a leader on campus. One of her professors, recognizing her potential, suggested that she try for a public-speaking prize that included tuition. Although she almost convinced herself that she could not compete, with coaching she won the contest and in doing so gained needed self-confidence. Derricotte became involved with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), joined the intercollegiate debating team, made speeches, and ultimately became president of the YWCA. It was during her tenure at Talladega that she realized one should work for something larger than oneself.

After graduating from Talladega in 1918, Derricotte moved to New York, to work at the national headquarters of the YWCA in the student

division. That fall she became secretary of the National Student Council of the YWCA, a position she held for eleven years. As secretary, she visited colleges, planned conferences, and worked with student groups, bringing ideas and building leadership. While in New York, Derricotte became friends with Lillian "Sadie" Alexander, Adele Hunt Logan, Mabel Byrd, Juanita "Jane" Saddler, Marion Cuthbert, and Lucy Diggs Slowe, African American women who supported the Harlem Renaissance. A member of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc., she was affiliated with the Alpha Beta Chapter, the sorority's first graduate chapter in New York City. She also became friends with white women working in the YWCA's student division. Although she did not constantly partake in issues of race, her presence made race an item of conversation. In 1924, Derricotte became a member of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), an international ecumenical organization, and began traveling the world as a delegate representing American colleges. After traveling the world representing the WSCF, she wrote of her experiences by saying "that there is so much more to know than I am accustomed to knowing and so much more to love than I am accustomed to loving".

In 1927 she received a master's degree in religious education from Columbia University, and continued her travels for the next two years, before resigning her position at the YWCA to become Dean of Women at Fisk University. Upon her arrival, Derricotte found the campus churning with the vicissitudes of change and in upheaval against obsolescent policies and rules, principally for young women. Derricotte was an adherent to the philosophy of interracialism. Interracialism

connoted a particular type of struggle for racial justice—one marked by dialogue, education and patience rather than protests, boycotts, and legal changes. Her adherence was inspired by the fruitful interactions between whites and blacks she witnessed during her tenure with the YWCA.

After conversing with her friend, Lucy Diggs Slowe, then Dean of Women at Howard University, Derricotte changed the Dean of Women's paradigm at Fisk University. She wanted the position to be academic rather than one of a chaperone. She transferred her residence from the dorm to one of the cottages on campus, giving students more freedom and more responsibility. While maintaining an open door policy to the university's young women, the move allowed her not to be an omnipresent overseer. Because of the student uprising of 1925 under the administration of President Fayette Avery McKenzie, Fisk went through major transformations. Dean Derricotte embraced the new autonomy given to students.

Following an illness in the summer of 1931, in November, Derricotte decided to visit her mother in Athens. She was accompanied by three Fisk students from Georgia. Outside of Dalton, Derricotte's car collided with that of a white couple. She and a student were seriously injured, and given emergency treatment in the offices of several white physicians in Dalton. No one directed them to Hamilton Memorial Hospital because the local residents knew it was for whites only. Critically injured, Fisk coed Nina Mae Johnson and Derricotte were sent to the home of an African American woman who had beds available for the care of African American patients. They were there for five hours before the other two students managed to contact friends in Chattanooga and Nashville. Derricotte and Johnson were transferred to Walden Hospital in Chattanooga. The hospital was owned and operated by Dr. Emma Rochelle Wheeler, a 1905 alumna of Meharry Medical College. Before they arrived in Chattanooga, Johnson died in route. Derricotte died the next day, November 7.

On November 12, 1931, members of the YWCA assembled in New York City to pay

tribute to Board member and former Student Secretary Juliette Derricotte. Her memorial at the YWCA was a moment of domestic racial awareness for the members of the National Board. Nancy M. Robertson in her work *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46* indicates that Derricotte's death caused a change within the YWCA, because her maltreatment unmasked the systemic injustice of Jim Crow. Following Derricotte's memorial service, the Headquarters Board of the National Student Council vowed to embark on "an unrelenting effort for a new and different civilization where segregation shall be abolished."

Derricotte's death caused national outrage, causing individuals such as W.E.B. DuBois and organizations including the Commission on Interracial Cooperation of Atlanta at the request of Fisk University, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to lead an investigation into her death. Memorial services were held across the country. Her *alma mater*, Talladega College honors the memory of its first woman trustee through the Juliette Derricotte House, a women's dormitory on campus. Derricotte sought to preserve black colleges as a space of interracial cooperation.

Linda T. Wynn

For further reading:

Lauren Kientz Anderson. "A Nauseating Sentiment, a Magical Device, or a Real Insight? Interracialism at Fisk University in 1930," in *Higher Education for African Americans Before the Civil Rights Era, 1900-1946*; Mary Beth Gasman and Roger L. Geiger, editors, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2012. 75-111.

Jean Elder Cazort. "Juliette Derricotte, 1897-1931" in *Notable Black American Women, Book 1*, Jessie Carney Smith, editor, Detroit: Gale Publishing, 1991. 275-277.

Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee



Fisk University Historic District

The Fisk University Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, honoring the University's long history and its architectural legacy from the late nineteenth century, including such landmarks as Jubilee Hall, the Carnegie Academic Building, the Fisk Memorial Chapel, and the Van Vechten Art Gallery. At the time of its nomination, some forty buildings were listed as contributing to the historic district, many of them former Victorian-era residences that were being used by the university as offices, classrooms, or faculty residences by the second half of the twentieth century.

A recent survey of the Fisk campus reveals that fewer than half of those forty buildings are extant on the Fisk campus today. Many of the single-family residences acquired by the university in the first half of the twentieth century have been demolished for campus expansions or due to the deteriorated condition of the buildings.

At the same time, many of the buildings considered non-contributing to the historic district in the 1970s are worthy of a reassessment for their historic and architectural significance to the university and to the city. At least ten of these twentieth-century buildings should now be considered as contributing to the Fisk University Historic District, and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. While many of these buildings do not possess the architectural

distinction of the Victorian-era buildings on campus, they are representative of the architectural style of the period in which they were built, and as such, are significant in their own right, for what they represent in both American architectural history as well as the important events surrounding Fisk and the Nashville community during the 1950s and 1960s. Many of the student activists important to the Civil Rights Movement as it grew in Nashville studied and lived in these buildings, creating a community that would change the racial climate in Nashville and across the nation.

Burrus Hall (1945): named for the Burrus brothers, two members of the first graduating class of Fisk University. Designed by McKissack and McKissack, Burrus Hall has served as the music building, as a men's dormitory, and as faculty apartments. The two-story brick building is L-shaped with stone framed entry doors facing both Meharry Boulevard and 16th Avenue North.

Henderson A. Johnson Gymnasium (1950): named for an outstanding student-athlete at Fisk who later served as a coach and physical education instructor. Henderson Johnson Gymnasium was designed by the prominent African-American architectural firm McKissack and McKissack to replace the Victorian gymnasium that had been rehabilitated into the Van Vechten Art Gallery.

Park Johnson Hall (1954): Park Hall was constructed in 1954 and named in honor of sociologist and educator Dr. Robert E. Park. Dr. Charles S. Johnson's name was added to the building following his sudden death in 1956. This three-story contemporary academic building was designed by McKissack and McKissack, and features the Fisk University seal in terrazzo in the entry hall.

DuBois Hall (1959): constructed as a dormitory for male students, DuBois Hall was designed by Godwin and Beckett Architects from Atlanta. It is named in honor of prominent Fisk alumnus, W.E.B. DuBois. Following a 2008 renovation, DuBois Hall now houses the departments of computer sciences, mathematics, physics and natural sciences in addition and the University's radio station.

Spence Hall (1959): Godwin and Beckett Architects designed Spence Hall as a modern student union building for Fisk. This three-story rectangular brick building was named for Adam K. Spence, classical language professor, minister, and the first academic dean at Fisk.

Crosthwaite Hall (1962): dedicated in October 1963 in honor of Fisk alumnae, faculty member, and registrar Minnie Lou Crosthwaite, this four-story brick L-shaped contemporary building was designed by Godwin and Beckett Architects. Crosthwaite Hall serves as a residence hall for women students.

President's House (1962): Constructed during the tenure of Fisk President Stephen Wright, the President's House is an exceptional Nashville example of mid-century modern residential architecture.

Creswell Residence (1964): *Jet* magazine congratulated Fisk comptroller Isaiah Creswell and his wife, Pearl Creswell, curator at the Van Vechten Gallery, on the completion of their "ultra modern glass and redwood residence" in 1964. This one-story residence features a pierced masonry screen wall along the façade, and is a unique Nashville example of mid-century modern residential architecture. The Creswell Residence is a privately-owned residence on the Fisk campus.

New Livingstone Hall (1966): replaced the 1880s building named for the missionary to Africa, David Livingstone. Old Livingstone Hall was destroyed by fire in the 1960s. Godwin and Beckett Architects from Atlanta designed this four-story brick L-shaped contemporary building, which now serves a men's dormitory.

Fisk University Library (1968-70): The Fisk University Library is one of the most striking of Fisk's modern landmarks. Godwin and Beckett Architects designed the modern library building, which features a concrete colonnade surrounding the building. The library has been named in honor of John Hope and Aurelia Franklin.

Shane Hall (1972): Shane Hall was named in honor of Fisk alumna and registrar Mary D. Shane. This five-story brick and concrete residence hall is a striking example of the modern pinwheel design architecture, and was designed by Anderson, Beckwith, and Haible, Architects, a leading firm in modern campus design.

Tara Mitchell Mielnik, Ph.D.

Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee

John Hope Franklin (1915 - 2009)



John Hope Franklin, historian, Civil Rights activist, and scholar of the African American experience in the United States, was born on January 2, 1915, in Rentiesville, Oklahoma. Coming of age in America during the era of Jim Crow, Franklin became a pioneer and the preeminent scholar in his field, holding positions at some of the most prestigious colleges in the United States. As an academic with a profound understanding of the history of race relations in America, he witnessed and participated in many of the seminal events of the twentieth century, laying the foundation for a new understanding of the history of Africans across the diaspora.

Franklin's parents, Buck and Mollie Franklin, moved to Rentiesville, Oklahoma—one of the state's many small all-black townships—shortly before his birth in 1915. Franklin's father, in search of work and better opportunity for his family, opened a law practice in Tulsa shortly after his son's birth. Franklin's mother, a teacher, took young John Hope to school with her, providing pencil and paper for her son and instructing him to remain quiet while class was in session. The visits to the classroom, his mother soon discovered, provided an early start to her son's education. These visits resulted in her son starting school already knowing how to read and write.

Franklin graduated as the valedictorian of Tulsa's Booker T. Washington High School in

1931, and headed to Fisk University. His arrival at Fisk in 1931 occurred during a period of unprecedented growth at the university. Harboring dreams of following in his father's footsteps, he pursued a degree in English and had plans of applying to law school after graduation. Fisk, with its nationally distinguished faculty and talented student body, provided an environment where Franklin's inquisitive mind and budding intellect could flourish.

The young scholar soon found that his presence at the esteemed university did not insulate him from the dehumanizing and often violent effects of Jim Crow. Two events impacted Franklin's views regarding civic activism. First, the untimely deaths of Juliette Derricotte, Fisk's much-beloved Dean of Women, and a young co-ed while on a trip to Georgia troubled Franklin as a student. Both women died in 1931 as a result of injuries sustained during a serious car accident in Georgia. Although the women were still alive when assistance reached the site of the wreck, no local hospitals would admit them because of their race.

Another event involved the lynching of an African American teenager from Maury County, Tennessee. Falsely charged with the attempted rape of a white woman, Cordie Cheek's family sent him to Nashville to live with his uncle who owned a home near the Fisk campus. In December 1933, two white men abducted Cheek from his uncle's home and returned him to Maury

County, turning the boy over to a lynch mob who subsequently murdered him and mutilated his body. These events had a profound effect on John Hope Franklin and the entire Fisk community, as the group struggled for most of the spring semester, debating how to respond to Cheek's murder. Franklin took on a leadership role in these discussions.

Surprisingly, these events, although central to Franklin's development while at Fisk, did not solidify his desire to pursue a career in law. Instead, the courses he took in history under Theodore S. Currier and his growing relationship with him as a student, caused him to change his major from English to history. The pursuit of a Ph.D. in the discipline at Harvard University became his desired goal. When he applied to and received an invitation to join its graduate program during his senior year, he became the first student from a historically black college to be admitted unconditionally to Harvard. Currier also demonstrated his faith in his star student after he left the halls of Fisk University. When it became clear that his former student did not have the funds to attend Harvard, Currier took out a personal loan of \$500 to assist Franklin in meeting the cost of tuition at the school.

Franklin's years at Harvard were as eventful as those he spent in Nashville. He completed the requirements for his masters and Ph.D. in 1935 and 1941, respectively, taught at St. Augustine College in North Carolina, and convinced Aurelia Whittington, a young woman he met at Fisk, to marry him in 1940. After graduation, he held positions at Fisk, Howard University, as chair of the history department at

Brooklyn College, and at the University of Chicago. His service as chair at Brooklyn College was significant because it made him the first African American to hold that post at a major American university.

Franklin published his pathbreaking book, *From Slavery to Freedom*, in 1947. This book remains the seminal text in the history of African Americans. Nearly seventy years after its initial publication, the book remains in print, has been translated into several languages, and has sold over three million copies.

In 1982, Franklin became the James B. Duke Professor of History at Duke University. The first African-American president of the American Historical Society, Franklin received the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Bill Clinton in 1995, among his more than 100 honorary degrees and additional accolades.

Franklin remained a prolific writer and internationally renowned lecturer until his death in Durham, North Carolina, on March 25, 2009. Throughout his life, he provided inspiration to countless students and scholars, gave wise counsel to civil rights organizations and heads of states, and left scores of scholarly works, including his groundbreaking *From Slavery to Freedom* (1947); *The Militant South* (1956); *Reconstruction After the Civil War* (1961); *Color and Race* (1968); *A Southern Odyssey: Travelers in the Antebellum North* (1975); and *George Washington Williams: A Biography* (1985), that continue to inform and inspire generations of historians.

Learotha Williams, Ph. D.

Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee

Roland Hayes (1887 - 1977)



Roland Hayes was a composer, educator, world renowned lyric tenor, and considered to be the first African American man to gain international acclaim as a concert performer. Critics continue to applaud his abilities and linguistic skills with songs in French, German and Italian. He was born on June 3, 1887, in Curryville, Georgia, to Fanny and William Hayes, sharecroppers on the very plantation where his mother was once a slave. Hayes' father, said to be his first teacher in music, claimed Cherokee ancestry; his maternal grandfather had been a chieftain from Cote d'Ivoire, or present day Ivory Coast. His mother was born a slave, yet became the co-founder of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Curryville. It was at this church where young Roland heard his first Negro spirituals. When Hayes' father died in 1898, his mother moved her remaining family to live on a ten-acre farm in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

As a youngster in Chattanooga, Hayes worked in a foundry as a means of contributing to the family income. In his free time, he trained with organist Arthur Calhoun, and later formed a singing group, the Silver-Toned Quartet, and decided to pursue a career in music. In the summer of 1905, Hayes quit his job at the foundry. He received \$50.00 from his apprehensive mother who still had hopes of his becoming a minister, although he was adamant about leaving Chattanooga in order to fulfill his dream of being a singer. He

planned to attend Oberlin College, but due to his limited finances and education, Hayes made the decision to enroll in the Fisk Preparatory School in Nashville.

After successfully completing preparatory classes at Fisk, Hayes enrolled there for college credits, paying his way via a variety of jobs, including furnace boy, waiter, butler, and soloist. In his fourth year, Hayes was ordered abruptly to turn in all his papers at the school, and was summarily expelled, perhaps for singing with an unauthorized group for money. Nevertheless, he was invited by the musical director of the Jubilee Singers at Fisk to sing at the commencement. Hayes left Nashville for Louisville after the commencement but returned as head tenor with the Jubilee Singers, and toured with them under the direction of John Wesley Work, II. It was also under the direction of Work that Hayes and two other members of the Jubilee Singers recorded nine spirituals for the Edison Phonograph Company.

Settling in Boston, Hayes studied music, worked at an insurance agency, and toured as a singer, eventually earning enough money to rent the Symphony Hall, where he performed to a sold-out hall and received critical acclaim. As his popularity grew, he was invited to perform concerts at Carnegie Hall, the Symphony Hall and other venues in America. In 1920, he performed his first European concert in London, at Wigmore

Hall, to rousing applause. After his concert, he was quickly summoned by King George V, to perform at Buckingham Palace where he found the same acceptance and praise. Hayes continued to perform concerts in Europe until his return to the states in 1923.

Though he was noted as a brilliant and accomplished singer and performer, Hayes' career did not come without its racial controversies and blatant prejudices, both at home and abroad. In Germany, he was criticized simply for being a black man, and thus soiling established traditions in performance. He was unjustly booed and ridiculed in several venues in Europe, but in continuing his performance, he sometimes found himself winning over his audience. No matter the location of his concerts, he attempted to integrate the seating arrangements whenever possible.

Ultimately, in 1924, he was awarded the Spingarn Medal, awarded annually by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, for outstanding achievement by an American of African descent.

Hayes married Helen Mann in 1932, and together they had one child, a daughter, Afrika. They maintained a residence in Massachusetts, and purchased 600 acres in Georgia where his mother had been a slave. In 1942, Hayes's wife and daughter were removed from a shoe store for violating the whites-only policy, and Hayes was beaten and jailed. They left Georgia soon after.

Roland Hayes continued to entertain and educate until 1972, when he gave his last concert at the age of 85. He died at the age of 89 on January 1, 1977, and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery in Boston. Among his honors include eight honorary degrees, one of which was from Fisk University; a performance center named in his honor in 1982, at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga; part of State Route 156 in Georgia is named in his honor; a music school in Boston bears his name; and in 1991 he was posthumously inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame.

- Pamela Bobo

For further reading:

Brooks, Christopher, and Robert Sims. *Roland Hayes: The Legacy of an American Tenor*. Indiana University Press, 2014.

MacKinley, Helm. *Angel Mo and her Son, Roland Hayes*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1942.

Owens, Joanne M. Roland Hayes (1887-1977). *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, 14 November 2013.
<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/roland-hayes>

Afrocentric Voices: Roland Hayes
Biography: <http://www.afrovoices.com/rhayes>.

Profiles of *African Americans* in Tennessee



Dr. Matthew W. Kennedy (1921 - 2014)

The gifted and talented Dr. Matthew W. Kennedy was born in Americus, Georgia on March 10, 1921, the grandchild of slaves in the segregated South. Nevertheless, his phenomenal musical talent enabled him to excel and overcome these hardships. During his life Kennedy would perform at Carnegie Hall and around the world, directing the Fisk Jubilee Singers for decades.

Royal Clement Kennedy, Matthew's father, marveled at his son's natural musical ability and realized that "there is something special in that baby" and encouraged the child's mother to develop his talent. Matthew's mother, Mary Dowdell Kennedy, a teacher and a soprano in the church choir, would inspire her son singing spirituals and hymns.

At the age of four, Kennedy followed the sound of music and played his first piano composition, "It's Me, O Lord, Standin' in the Need of Prayer" by ear. It did not take long for others to realize his talent as a child prodigy. He took piano lessons once a week from a white teacher, Kate Land, paying for his lessons by cleaning her studio. Land arranged for the young boy to be featured in a fifteen minute WENC radio show playing classical compositions on the piano. By 1932, the young Matthew had been greatly inspired after hearing Sergei Rachmaninoff performance in Macon, Georgia.

Matthew and his parents had to sit in the segregated balcony of the concert hall. Soon he began to imitate the Russian pianist's playing style. Another white music teacher, Mrs. Irene Drake, heard Matthew play and arranged for him to live in her home while he attended Ballard Normal, a private Christian school. The Drakes used their influence to help Matthew get another radio show, "Music with Matthew Kennedy Show" sponsored by Banker's Life Insurance.

In 1934 after moving to New York with his mother, Matthew enrolled in DeWitt Clinton High School. Another music teacher, Lois Adler, helped him enter the prestigious Julliard Institute of Music. It was during this period that he was able to meet the great Duke Ellington. Matthew had an audition with "The Duke" in his New York apartment. Ellington was impressed with the promising protégée, but advised Kennedy's mother not to expose the sixteen year old to the nightclub circuit of smoking and alcohol, and that he should continue his studies at Julliard. Matthew Kennedy earned his diploma in piano in 1940.

Kennedy went on to attend Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. He became the piano accompanist to the historic Fisk Jubilee Singers, under the direction of Jane A. Myers, and toured Europe, North Africa, and Israel. Drafted

into the army in 1943, he served his country during World War II in France and North Africa. He formed a small military band to entertain the troops. After the military he returned to Fisk and graduated cum laude with a B.A. degree from Fisk in 1947, then went on to earn his M.A degree from Julliard in 1950 and a Ph.D. from George Peabody College in Nashville. He became a faculty member of his alma mater, Fisk University, where he taught and directed the Fisk Jubilee Singers. He married another Julliard pianist on the Fisk faculty, Anne Gamble in 1956, and they had one child, a daughter, Nina. In 1958 Kennedy made his New York solo piano debut at Carnegie Recital Hall. He also played at the Apollo Theatre and performed extensively in duo appearances with his wife Anne Gamble. In 1973, he was a member of the piano faculty at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Interlochen Michigan. After 24 years directing the Jubilee Singers, and 33 years on the Fisk faculty, Kennedy retired in 1986.

During his lengthy career in music Dr. Kennedy served on resource panels for the Tennessee Arts Commission, boards of the Nashville Symphony Association and the John W. Work III Memorial Foundation. He received several distinguished service awards throughout his career and is listed in "Who's

Who Among Black Musicians," "Who's Who in America," "American Keyboard Artists," "Who's Who in Entertainment and "Who's Who of World Musicians." He received the Achievement Award from the National Black Music Caucus of the Music Educators National Conference.

Active in the local community, Dr. Kennedy was past President of the Fine Arts Club and played piano at First Baptist Church Capitol Hill well into his 90's. Fisk University conferred him the honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters. He was inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame and is the subject of the 2007 award winning documentary: "Matthew Kennedy: One Man's Journey," a film produced and directed by his daughter Nina.

The Anne Gamble and Matthew W. Kennedy Scholarship Endowment was established in support of Fisk music students' education. To honor the legacy of Dr. Kennedy, Nina Kennedy established the Kennedy Music Fund to spark global participation and awareness of his beloved cause. Dr. Matthew W. Kennedy died June 5, 2014.

- Gloria Haugabook McKissack
