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Letter, 1944 October 5, from William Grant Still to Eva Jessye

William Grant Still

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[William Grant Still]

3670 Cimarron Street
Los Angeles 7, California
October 6, 1944

Dear Eva:

I am delighted to know that Mr. Stokowski has written to you, and for many reasons I hope you will be able to do this opera. One is that among the choir directors now on the East coast, I definitely prefer your work, and in the conversation I had with Mr. Stokowski last August I find that he is in complete agreement. He felt that you did a good job of the Lynching piece.

When we talked together, I told him about several singers, and he took notes, promising to hear them sing and lately I had a letter from him, again promising to follow up all the people I suggested. Of course I am quite content to leave the final choices of singers for the roles to him, because he will get the best possible. And naturally I am leaving all other details to him, and to his assistant, Sylvan Levin, whom I hope you will like. He used to be the artistic director of the Philadelphia Opera Company, and is a fine person as well as an excellent musician.

Last week Etta Moten and her husband visited us, and of course we talked about the opera (as a matter of fact, that's about all I am thinking of nowadays!) but unfortunately the Porgy tour will keep her out of New York until April, so she is not even able to get there to sing for Mr. Stokowski. I am sorry about this, but things do happen that way sometimes. However, I just learned that there are two new contraltos in New York who are supposed to be splendid musicians. Mr. Stokowski is going to hear them sing.

Fortunately, Kenneth Spencer just came in from the South Pacific and will be in New York next week, so he will get in touch with Mr. Stokowski, and I wrote to him about Muriel Rahn's quick departure for her concert tour, and suggested that he try to hear her before she leaves, so I hope that goes through as planned. As for the other singers we discussed, I hope and trust that they are all in New York now and able to keep whatever appointments he makes with them.

I guess the foregoing covers all your questions except the one concerning the time of the production. As yet we do not know, except that it will be in the Spring. I am going to try to get back to see it, but will not stay long.

Would appreciate it if you could let me know what happens!

All good wishes.

Sincerely,

Still