

A professor's email to the author of *Our World, Our Music* poses a good question:

A professor writes :

Dr. Elliott,
I got this from one of my students:
 Professor X,
 We are learning a lot about Handel and Bach, but since we are in a historically black university, I would like to also learn about African Americans' contributions to the Baroque period. I am sure there are some.
I challenged him to do some research and write a paper on this subject.
Have a good day,
Prof. X

Dr. Elliott responded:

Hello Prof. X,

Your student asks a good question, one that I considered in depth while writing *Our World, Our Music*. Here is my best response to your student:

I know of one Black composer of the Baroque period from the Americas. He was the son of a South American plantation owner and a slave mother. He was educated in his home country and in Europe. (He was also trained to be a pretty good swordsman.) He is included in the list of names for Composer Reports in *Our World, Our Music*. See who in your class can find him first!

Unfortunately, other than that one name, I have uncovered no others from that time. The 1600s and early-1700s in what becomes the United States is a pre-Age of Enlightenment time period. Additionally, that society's focus was upon expansion west into "open" areas, survival, and freedom from the crushing tax burden imposed by England. Not only were there no significant African American composers of that time, there were also no significant American composers of any type—period.

Sometimes we do not fully appreciate the differences between our present culture and society and that of our ancestors. The freedoms, rights, and opportunities that people of our society enjoy, especially women, Native Americans, and people of color, are relatively new phenomena, as noted in Chapter 6 of our book.

You may share my response with your students.

Regards,

Dr. Robert L. Elliott