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THE LAST WORD



CECIL WILLIAMS

Duo set to record CD of unpublished works

AN UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY during a research trip has led to a recording contract for two young teachers at Claflin University.

Stacey Holliday, a music instructor, accompanist and member of Furman's Class of 2004, and Meisha Adderley, an assistant professor of music and piano, are developing a CD featuring works by African-American composers. The album is scheduled to be released in the spring of 2012 by Albany Records, a leading producer of classical recordings.

"Many of these works have never been published. We feel they deserve to be heard and enjoyed," Adderley says.

Holliday (right in photo), who joined the Claflin faculty in 2008, says, "I was very surprised, honestly. Albany Records is extremely prestigious. It was a huge undertaking for us. It's very exciting."

After meeting at the Orangeburg, S.C., school in early 2009, the two struck up a friendship and began performing duets. "It's a rarity to find two classically trained African-American pianists actively performing at the same institution," Adderley says.

They also began collaborating on research on African-American composers. Their efforts led them to the archives of the Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College in Chicago, where they uncovered a store of unpublished works.

Adderley and Holliday decided to record a studio demo of some of their discoveries. Over the last year, they took the music on the road and performed across the country.

Recently they were contacted by Susan Bush, president of Albany Records, who commended them on their choice of repertoire and their "fine playing" on the demo. When she offered the record deal, the Claflin duo happily accepted. Holliday says they have already recorded a significant amount of material.

Solo pieces and duets will be included on the album, which is likely to feature works by, among others, Delores White, a Chicago-based composer. Adderley describes White's music as a blend of European, Cuban and African-American influences. Compositions from William Grant Still, the first person of color to conduct a major symphony orchestra, will also be included. Still is often called the dean of African-American composers.

Adderley graduated from Indiana State University and earned her advanced degrees from the University of South Carolina. Holliday earned a master's and a graduate certificate in piano performance from USC, where she studied collaborative piano. A student of Derek Parsons at Furman, she was a member of the piano faculty at Camp Encore/Coda in Sweden, Maine, in the summers of 2007 and 2008. She was awarded first prize in the 2006 USC piano concerto competition and honorable mention in the 2005 MTNA Steinway Young Artists Competition at the state level.

— LEE TANT

The author is assistant director of public relations at Claflin.