

the local church or community chorus and whoever wanted to sing—often a few hundred voices of varied skill and capability—train them for approximately ten days, and then conduct them in concert. Sometimes, she would share the stage with promising local singers or musicians. Mme. Hackley would supplement the concert by giving free classes on “voice culture,” lecture demonstrations, and other workshops, which were emphatically not just about singing.

The purpose of these “voice culture” classes and demonstrations was to enable her students—children and grandchildren of former slaves—to discover within themselves a cognitive power, and to communicate it in song—Classical song—to others. A certain outlook is required for singing, Hackley would explain to her students: “If one is a Somebody and has done nothing of which he is ashamed, one may look upwards towards the face of his Maker because he is in His image, and every line will say, ‘I am a Somebody. . . .’”

That she held such classes in the South, where this defiant teacher travelled even as Jim Crow laws were in effect, was not without major difficulties. Blacks who didn’t “know their place,” or who “stepped out of line,” could pay with harassment and even their lives.

Poise of a ‘Somebody’

Working to instill a sense of purpose in everyone she could reach, Hackley authored short books and numerous periodical articles. She lectured at schools, colleges, churches, and communities. In her 1909 *Guide to Voice Culture*, Mme. Hackley developed a concept of the physical and cognitive processes involved in singing. The text conveys certain laws of physics which govern the production of sound, and other basics. But, what she begins with, and returns to throughout, is that a crucial mind-set is required if one is to create and communicate an idea. Thus, while consciously working to create a beautiful *sound*, she was undertaking to create and develop beautiful *souls*. For example, in explaining the importance of voice placement, Mme. Hackley quotes Plato on the diaphragm. She explains how a high fixed chest will become a habit: “This high fixed condition is the poise of a ‘Somebody,’ and if one *is* a ‘Somebody,’ his carriage should imply the fact.”

From December 1914 through March 1915, Mme. Hackley published a series of articles in the *New York Age*, titled “Hints to Young Colored Artists.” These included not only comportment in the professional world, but, as usual, in life

Schiller Institute Upholds The Legacy of Mme. Hackley

In the early 1990s, civil rights heroine Amelia Boynton Robinson and two other African-American legends, vocal coach Sylvia Olden Lee and operatic baritone Robert McFerrin, collaborated with Lyndon LaRouche on a project of making Washington, D.C., a desirable, safe, and beautiful place to live. Rather than having children duck bullets while walking to school, LaRouche proposed a cultural intervention into the nation’s capital.

Sylvia Olden Lee had already taken upon herself the mission of saving the African-American Spiritual, and insisted that renewing the practice of *bel canto* singing, would communicate the essence of this tradition. Schiller Institute Vice Chairwoman Amelia Boynton Robinson revived the musical drama she had written in 1936, *Through the Years*, which incorporated many African-American Spirituals, and it was performed in American cities, with more than 1,000 children participating in Washington, D.C. alone.

The Schiller Institute sponsored free Classical concerts, featuring the best professional and also amateur Classical singers of opera, *Lieder* (German art songs), and spirituals. This work was advanced by an order of magnitude, when world-renowned baritone Dr. William War-

field joined the Schiller Institute Board in 1996, teaching master classes and holding concerts, workshops, and discussions, as well as instructing members of the LaRouche movement. Most inspiring, Dr. Warfield, a student of the tradition represented by the almost-forgotten Mme. Hackley, coached members of the LaRouche Youth Movement, until his death in August 2002. With his coaching, young men and women were steeped in singing *Lieder* and Spirituals, and in the lost art of poetry recitation, presenting the works of Keats, Shelley, Shakespeare, Schiller, as well as the late-19th-Century African-American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar.



Sylvia Olden Lee and William Warfield at a Schiller Institute conference in Washington, D.C., May 27, 1994.