

By: Representative Clark

To: Rules

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 88

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION MEMORIALIZING MUSICIAN WILLIAM GRANT
2 STILL AND CELEBRATING HIS MUSIC.

3 WHEREAS, William Grant Still was born on May 11, 1895, in
4 Woodville, Mississippi, to parents who were teachers and musicians
5 of Negro, Indian, Spanish, Irish and Scotch bloodlines; and

6 WHEREAS, Dr. Still's musical education began with violin
7 lessons from a private teacher in Little Rock, Arkansas, where his
8 family moved after his father passed away; and

9 WHEREAS, at Wilberforce University, Dr. Still earned a
10 bachelor of science degree, but spent most of his time conducting
11 the band, learning to play various instruments and making initial
12 attempts to compose and to orchestrate; and

13 WHEREAS, Dr. Still also studied at the Oberlin Conservatory
14 of Music, which was financed at first by a legacy from his father
15 and later by a scholarship established just for him by the
16 faculty; and

17 WHEREAS, after college, Dr. Still entered the world of
18 commercial music playing in orchestras and orchestrating, playing
19 specifically the violin, cello and oboe; and

20 WHEREAS, Dr. Still worked for music greats such as W.C.
21 Handy, Don Voorhees, Sophie Tucker, Paul Whiteman, Willard
22 Robison, Artie Shaw and, for several years, arranged and conducted
23 the "Deep River Hour" over CBS and WOR; and

24 WHEREAS, while in Boston playing the oboe in the "Shuffle
25 Along" orchestra, Dr. Still applied to study at the New England
26 Conservatory with George Chadwick and was rewarded with a

27 scholarship due to Mr. Chadwick's own vision and generosity; and

28 WHEREAS, in the twenties, Dr. Still made his first appearance
29 as a serious composer in New York and was given commissions from
30 the CBS, the New York World's Fair, Paul Whiteman, the League of
31 Composers, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Southern Conference
32 Educational Fund and the American Accordionists' Association; and
33 WHEREAS, throughout his career, Dr. Still received numerous
34 awards, including the Jubilee prize of the Cincinnati Symphony
35 Orchestra for the best Overture to celebrate its Jubilee season
36 with a work entitled "Festive Overture," a Freedoms Foundation
37 Award for his "To You, America!" which honored West Point's
38 Sesquicentennial Celebration and the prize offered by the United
39 States Committee for the United Nations, the N.F.M.C. and the
40 Aeolian Music Foundation for his orchestral work, "The Peaceful
41 Land," cited as the best musical composition honoring the United
42 Nations; and

43 WHEREAS, Dr. Still was awarded honorary degrees, including a
44 Master of Music from Wilberforce University, a Doctor of Music
45 from Howard University, Doctor of Music from Oberlin College,
46 Doctor of Letters from Bates College, Doctor of Laws from the
47 University of Arkansas, Doctor of Fine Arts from Pepperdine
48 University and a Doctor of Music from the New England
49 Conservatory, the Peabody Conservatory and the University of
50 Southern California; and

51 WHEREAS, in 1939, Dr. Still married journalist and concert
52 pianist, Verna Arvey, who became his principal collaborator, and
53 they remained together until his death on December 3, 1978; and

54 WHEREAS, Dr. Still, known as the "Dean of Afro-American
55 Composers," was the first African-American to write a major
56 symphonic work performed by a major American orchestra, to conduct
57 a major symphony orchestra in the United States and the Deep
58 South, to conduct a major American network radio orchestra, to
59 have an opera produced by a major American company and to have an
60 opera televised over a national network in the United States; and

61 WHEREAS, Dr. Still wrote over 150 compositions, including
62 operas, ballets, symphonies, chamber works and arrangements of
63 folk themes, especially Negro spirituals, plus instrumental,

64 choral and solo vocal works; and

65 WHEREAS, the Legislature finds it most appropriate to
66 recognize and pay special tribute to an outstanding musician as
67 Dr. William Grant Still, who was able to create music that was
68 interesting to the greatest conductors of the day:

69 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
70 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING
71 THEREIN, That we do hereby memorialize the life and works of Dr.
72 William Grant Still and celebrate the immortality of his music.

73 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
74 furnished to the family of Dr. William Grant Still and members of
75 the Capitol Press Corps.