



Nobody Knows: The Forgotten Story of One of the Most Influential Figures in American Music

Craig Von Buseck

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We shouldn't be surprised when we see God use the ordinary to accomplish the incredible. We should be inspired.

From the depths of near obscurity at the turn of the last century, a young African American man rose to fame through those ordinary things--listening to his grandfather sing the old slave songs as he lit the streetlamps, sweating through a rented suit during an audition, having a chance meeting with a musical legend as he was mopping the halls of his school. Through the seemingly insignificant pieces of life, God led Harry T. Burleigh along the path to fame, and through him preserved the songs that would form the basis of a uniquely American music.

Now Harry T. Burleigh, once world-renowned for his career as a beautiful baritone soloist, an arranger of Negro spirituals, and a composer in his own right, is lifted out of obscurity once more by Craig von Buseck. This inspiring true story will take you back in time to Southern plantations and Northern boom towns, to minstrel shows and soaring sanctuaries, and into the heart of a man who never suspected that God had destined him for greatness.

Nobody Knows: The Forgotten Story of One of the Most Influential Figures in American Music Details

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Ferrell says

This a great story, but the author's execution of it bothers me. It is written more like historical fiction, with the author giving detailed descriptions of experiences and exact quotations of conversations that would seem almost impossible to obtain. I suspect von Buseck captured the essence of Harry T. Burleigh's amazing life, but it is hard to tell where fact and imagination are at work. This story cries out for writing by a good historian. Despite this book's shortcomings, if it will help more people, like me, to become acquainted with the life of Harry T. Burleigh, then it surely has accomplished a great deal.

Bethany says

I liked the subject of the story. I liked the story. I didn't love the telling of the story. Throughout most of the book, the character told me things, rather than showing me. In some places the dialogue taught me nothing - it's as if someone said, "Oh, you need dialogue here," so it was added.

That said, I really enjoyed learning about this character in history and the ways in which his life intersected with others I've heard about. What a rich life!

Barry Pepper says

Excellent historical book. If you like history, the Civil War era, and music (like I do), you will enjoy this book. The story of Harry Burleigh's life, music and the people he rubbed shoulders with in his life- Teddy Roosevelt, J.P. Morgan, etc are exceptional. Also interesting is the fact that he was born and raised in Erie, PA- the grandson of a former slave who was the lamplighter of Erie. How his grandparents, parents and those he met shaped his life are wonderful. I did not know how influential he was at the turn of the century. A very interesting read.

Della Loreda says

This is probably the most engaging non-fiction book I've ever read. It tells the fascinating story of Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949), an African-American who overcame poverty and discrimination to fulfill his dream of becoming a musician. Ultimately, he became the person most responsible for preserving many of the spirituals we're familiar with today.

Roberta says

When I received a free copy of this book as a Goodreads giveaway I asked myself "Did I request this book? What was I thinking?!" Mainly, I would not have knowingly requested a book written by someone connected

with the Christian Broadcasting Network for fear of getting a book that was all preachy. Since I got it as a giveaway, I felt obligated to at least give it a try and it turned out to be quite a surprise. I debated whether to give it 4 stars or 5.

This book is about Harry T. Buleigh who was gifted with a wonderful voice and encouraged by his mother to pursue a career in music when very few opportunities existed for Black musicians outside of the minstrel shows. Although he was born and raised in Pennsylvania, he learned all of the plantation songs from his grandfather, Hamilton Waters, who had raised the money to buy himself and his mother out of slavery and leave the South in 1832.

The book, which followed Hamilton Waters from slavery to freedom and his grandson, Harry T. Buleigh, from childhood poverty in Erie, PA, to a professional musical career in New York City, was enlightening and gave a personal face to the stories of 19th and early 20th century African American families.

The book reads like a novel, including thoughts and conversations that are assumed, but making it very readable, not heavy going or too academic. I guess I didn't expect to learn much from a book written in this style but I was wrong. Out of left field this book explained a loophole in the Pennsylvania slavery legislation of 1 March 1780 that I have gone through two law books trying to find for a project that I am working on.

I have two criticisms of the book that are minor in light of how interesting and informative the book is otherwise. First, although I know all of the spirituals that were discussed in the book (Thank you, Mrs. Kilbourn!) I am not familiar with some of the popular secular songs that were mentioned and could not find anything about a couple of them (lyrics, scores, or recordings) online. Burleigh's wife was treated harshly by critics for singing a song called "I've Got Good Common Sense." This was apparently a popular song at the time but I've never heard it and don't know the lyrics. There might have been just two or three pages given over to scores of what are now obscure songs or a reference to where they might be found. The titles of two or three books listed in the bibliography suggest that the spirituals might be found there but there is no apparent reference to the secular songs.

Because I was looking at the references in the bibliography, I noticed that a few of the references are so vague that they break the most basic "must give enough information to find the stuff" rule of citation. Also, at least one citation gave "America Online" as the author of something that quite clearly had an actual human author whose name was not given.

Gerald Greene says

What a great book. I'm glad to learn of this man's life of humility and service.

Julie says

As one who is neither spiritual nor a believer, I approached *Nobody Knows* with some reservations. I was expecting to be thumped on the nose repeatedly with religious propaganda, and I certainly was. However, it was woven tastefully into the story of Harry T. Burleigh, and completely relevant to the struggles faced by the Burleigh family. I was taken on a journey from pre-birth to death. Throughout my read I felt sorrow, I laughed, and I cried.

Craig von Buseck knows how to tell a story and keep me engrossed, and while I probably won't read any of

his other books (for personal reasons), I definitely do not regret my intimate peek into Burleigh's life.

P.e. lolo says

First let me say that I have never heard of this man before. Harry T. Burleigh. He would first start out singing what they called plantation songs, he was taught those by his grandfather. Along with stories about his family. He would learn another set of songs from the hands working in the stables but those songs were sung there or by himself. If his mama or step daddy heard any of those songs he would have been tanned with a switch. He would continue to sing and play the piano but mostly sing. With the help of Francis MacDowell, Burleigh was accepted into the National Conservatory of Music in New York. Once accepted he also worked for the registrar Mrs. MacDowell, so he could also earn some money. He would sing spirituals while working at night moping the floors when he meet the composer Antonin Dvorak the Czech composer who was teaching at the school. He would spend time with his family and also singing and telling him the same stories that his grand farther told him. Through Burleigh and the music he shared it became an inspiration for Dvoraks New World Symphony. By 1893 word was spreading about his voice and he was doing concerts at various towns. Then in 1894 he was asked to become a soloist for the ST. George Episcopal church in New York City. This was not only the oldest and largest but also all white. He accepted and although some members walked out others stayed and he stayed. He would become friends with JPMorgan, sing at Governors Teddy Roosevelt's inauguration, just to name a few. From 1900-1925 he was also a member of the Synagogue choir at the Temple Emanu-El in New York City, the only African- American to sing there. He would go on to many more great things in the world of music his one down side was his personal life that part was sad. This is a fascinating book about a man who touched so many people not only with his voice but also made them look at themselves and the way they treated there fellow man. I got this book from net galley.

Valerie Caraotta says

You will be enlightened, inspired and thoroughly engaged in this true story as Author Craig Von Buseck traces the life of the great Soloist and Composer Harry Thacker Burleigh. Often, and in this case, to understand how great success originated it begins with a comprehensive look at ancestors that were forerunners and instilled qualities and passions that refused to die.

This book will bless you in the following ways:

- Provide encouragement that God is Sovereign and weaves our life through the good and bad.
- Know loving God can produce amazing favor
- Learn that finding your calling and pursuing it will ignite purpose and bless others as well.

It was on the harsh slave plantations that Harry would listen as his grandfather taught him and sung the Spirituals. Born out of anguish, it was songs the slaves would sing to help them press on despite hardship and sorrow. As a young boy, the opportunity to work with his mom at the Russell Mansion where musical guests performed ignited a spark in him to someday sing before audiences.

You must understand these amazing sets of circumstances that will take the good and bad from the past and weave it into God's purpose. It's a story to never say never when humble means seem to prevent advancement. Watch the hand of od move in hearts causing 1 divine appointment after another. From the Conservatory scholarship to his first professional job and then his entire career, Harry T. Burleigh was born

"for such a time as this.". His later world wide fame would find him singing in the finest concert halls and allow him to cross paths with Booker T. Washington, J.P. Morgan, Teddy Roosevelt and King Edward to name a few.

The height of his success did not mean it was void of personal heartache. As you explore this man on this incredible mission perhaps you too will agree that the power of song sung in reverence to our Savior can sustain us in the vississitudes of life.

Author Buseck will take you through history that transcends racial lives and highlights the love of God in action. A must read inspirational work.
