

MARTHA GRAHAM

66 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK

August 12, 1942



Dear Aaron:

I am glad you feel open-minded regarding the acceptance of Mrs. Coolidge's commission to do a score for me. It really seems possible that if we can get together on this matter of script and performance arrangements that we might have some exciting presentation.

Regarding the libretto, I should like to submit to you another idea I have which might be more acceptable to you than the one you have. I should like to have the music at least by the beginning of next July if you think that would be at all possible. Of course, if it could be earlier that would be so much the better, but I realize your commitments are such that you are very busy.

I had a letter from Mrs. Coolidge saying she had written to you, and also "It is my thought that as we are planning to have other works on the program the piece should not occupy more than half an hour at the outside. And I also wish it to be composed as true chamber music, which is to say for an ensemble of not more than ten or twelve instrument at the outside. This seems to be the most appropriate and beautiful work for such an occasion as ours, and I should therefore recommend a small orchestra with one instrument of each kind, both wind and string, with piano."

I had said I would show her the script, but she feels that is not necessary and that the idea of the work and its working out could be left in our hands. If the performance is early in September of 1943 I should need the score before the first of July--presumably about the first of June; but tell me what you can do on this.

As to the matter of performance fee, do you mean in the nature of a royalty or do you mean a flat sum? As you know, I have always been very embarrassed in offering you the very small amount that I have had available for that purpose. This is the first time I have ever had a work commissioned for me except in so far as Bennington has helped me, and whatever fee I agree to I have to be certain I can meet it either from my teaching or from my performance intake. This last year was successful, but I had to make certain investments with WGN in advertising and so forth, so I had no surplus.

You remember when I wrote you before I stated what I could do. In the event of the festival I shall have to

supply all staging, costumes, and the expenses of production, such as rehearsals and so forth, because my arrangements with Mrs. Coolidge cover only the commission to the composer. I am explaining this to you so that you will understand why I cannot do more than perhaps I originally agreed to do. I could either pay you at the very small rate of \$15 a performance for ten performances or I could give you that \$150 in one sum, with the understanding that if I should have help on production in any way I might be able to make it more. I know that this is nothing in comparison to the fees you receive, and I can understand if you feel that you cannot do it for that amount. But with the knowledge that I have to meet the production expenses, unless I can get help on them from some other source, out of my earnings I cannot commit myself to any greater figure.

You see, in a way so many of us are in this same boat. This is the first time to my knowledge that a work has been commissioned for a dance organization, other than the ballet companies; and, you see, I have no subsidy whatever and never have had. The nearest to it has been the costs of production of experiments which have been met by Bennington as a teaching fee. I explain all this to you so that you may understand my position.

Naturally I want you to feel at ease about this whole arrangement. You know how long I have looked forward to having music by you and how much I respect and admire you as a composer. If you feel this is not possible for you, will you be quite frank with me?

Regarding the libretto, do you want that definitely in your hands as to idea before you give your final word to Mrs. Coolidge? Also when would you have to have the libretto to start work? It would be done in the same manner that the one you already hold has been done--that is, I should work it out as carefully as possible as to minutes and time balances.

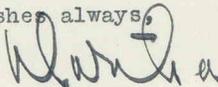
I shall be here for two weeks longer working on my new piece, which I hope to present in New York in December; so you can reach me here. It is possible even for me to go down to see you if it is necessary, although I should prefer waiting until this two-week period of intensive work is over. Are you planning to be in New York in the fall? I ask you all these questions in the event that you do accept the commission. Will you let me hear from you as soon as possible? I have told Mrs. Coolidge I was writing to you at once.

Sometime I will tell you the experiences of meeting with Mrs. Coolidge, and how suddenly this all came about. As a matter of fact, she saw the performance in the evening, the

next morning talked with Dr. Spivacke, and in the afternoon told me her plans. So you see it was sudden and exciting.

I hope you are having a good summer, and I hope you can do this. That is, I hope you really want to do it. You know that unless you really want to I want you to be quite frank.

Best wishes always



Martha Graham

MG/mel