

DARRELL GRANT'S STEP BY STEP: THE RUBY BRIDGES SUITE



Image by Nancy Pierce/UDA

Norman Rockwell's image of a six-year-old black girl accompanied by National Guard on her way to school has become an iconic symbol of America's civil rights era. The story of Ruby Bridges, the first African-American child to attend an all-white public elementary school in the American South, is a tale of courage that resonates across generations.

Commissioned in 2012 by Reed College, Darrell Grant's *Step by Step: The Ruby Bridges Suite* is a multi-movement piece for eight instrumentalists, vocalist, and narrator that draws on gospel and spiritual traditions as well as jazz and chamber music. The piece incorporates music and spoken word to illustrate an emotional portrait of a dramatic time in US history.

Some movements, like "Summer 1959," and "The Cheerleaders"—which depicts the racism that Ruby encountered as she traversed the route to the William Frantz Elementary School—portray specific incidents. Others, like "Hold My Hand" written from the perspective of Ruby's mother and the finale "We Rise," capture the emotions behind the story.

Step by Step's Narrator provides critical context on the historical and racial climate surrounding Bridges' story, framing the musical movements with speeches from W.E.B. DuBois and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., poems, newspaper articles, Supreme Court rulings, and the words of Ruby Bridges herself.

An arrangement for multiple vocal soloists and a gospel choir has been performed in Nashville, Washington D.C., and New Orleans to great acclaim.

Darrell Grant, piano/composer
Joe Locke, vibraphone
Steve Wilson, saxophones
Clark Sommers, bass
Brian Blade, drums
Marilyn Keller, voice
John Nastos, bass clarinet
Farnell Newton, trumpet
Anthony Dyer, viola
Kevin Jones, narrator

Choral version also includes guest soprano, guest choir, and Jason Shelton as conductor

darrellgrant.com



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