

Marian Anderson

Contralto

(1897-1993)



Marian Anderson was the first African American invited to perform at the White House and the first to perform with the New York Metropolitan Opera.

Anderson was born on February 27, 1897 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She began singing with the youth choir in her church. The church members were so impressed with her voice that they started a fund so she could be formally trained with a local and well known voice instructor. After two years of voice lessons she won a contest organized by the New York Philharmonic and later received a scholarship to sing on a tour through Europe.

In 1939 she was invited to perform in the White House when President Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt were entertaining the King and Queen of Great Britain.

When the Daughters of the American Revolution refused to let her perform at Constitution Hall in Washington, DC, Eleanor Roosevelt, who was a member of the organization resigned in protest and arranged for her to sing at the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday. 75,000 people attended the performance.

Anderson made her debut at the New York Metropolitan Opera in January 1955, and in 1961 sang the National Anthem at President John F. Kennedy's inauguration.