

***Caged bird (2021-22)***  
*For string trio and piano*

*Information about the video recording:*

The piece was commissioned and recorded by Quarteto Boulanger in the Album “Entre Brumas e Fúrias”, in Minas Gerais, Brazil, in 2022.

**YouTube link of the recording: <https://youtu.be/NPOGNGxo3fA>**

Inspired by the eponym poem by  
Maya Angelou

*A free bird leaps  
on the back of the wind  
and floats downstream  
till the current ends  
and dips his wing  
in the orange sun rays  
and dares to claim the sky.*

*But a bird that stalks  
down his narrow cage  
can seldom see through  
his bars of rage  
his wings are clipped and  
his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.*

*The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.*

*The free bird thinks of another breeze  
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees  
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn  
and he names the sky his own*

*But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams  
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream  
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.*

*The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.*

Maya Angelou, "Caged Bird" from *Shaker, Why Don't You Sing?* Copyright © 1983 by Maya Angelou.  
Source: The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou (Random House Inc., 1994)

### **Program Note**

In her poem Caged Bird, Maya Angelou metaphorically calls for an anti-racist policy. There, she passionately sings about her yearning for freedom, even though her people, in the time and society in which she lives, have almost no idea of what a free being can be. The poem, published in the 1980s, reflects a struggle waged on North American soil that reached its symbolic peak in the 1960s when Angelou lost two friends and leaders of this libertarian demand: Malcolm X and Martin Luther King.

In his legendary speech given in 1963 in Washington D.C., Martin Luther King, like Angelou, when dreaming of freedom, says he hopes that one day the North American nation will rise up and achieve its highest calling: that of recognizing equality between all human beings. By spectrally analyzing the voice of this speech, the sounds that give body to this caged bird to which I breathe life emerge. It sees from afar the freedom of other birds that hold the heavens and are oppressed, sings to support the reality in which it lives, and expresses its desire to run away from such destiny. From his speech "I Have a Dream" (1963), I extract the harmonies, the rhythms, the movement, and the flight of this winged being who does not know how to sing but who does not let himself be silenced, who does not know how to fly but who does not stop struggling. They may even try to kill his body, as they have killed so many times, but the idea it forges of freedom, this desire, and this persistence in existing, is immortal.

They will not silence us.

A video demonstrating how I worked and collected data from Martin Luther King's speech can be viewed at the link: <https://youtu.be/OZed-MkZ8o0>.