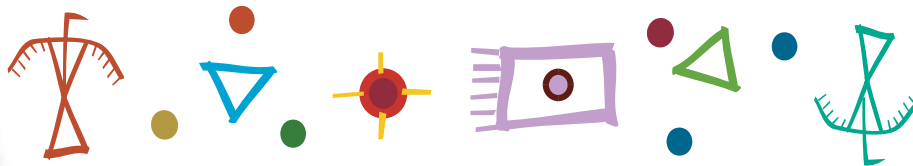


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## Know Your Artist: Charlotte Blake Alston



When she was six years old, Charlotte Blake Alston's father gave her a copy of the complete poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar, an African-American poet who often wrote in the dialect of African-Americans in the late nineteenth century. Charlotte's father would choose poems for her to memorize, and he wrote funny monologues for her to recite. She would perform these long pieces and poems at church functions. In this way, she became comfortable speaking in front of large groups of people. After college, Charlotte became a teacher. She found that storytelling kept her students interested in history and literature. Soon she was being asked to tell her stories before many different groups. In performance and in her study of African folk tales and the tradition of African-American storytelling, Charlotte learned that stories can be used to help audiences appreciate the different ways people see the world based on their cultural identities.

Today, Charlotte hosts both the Philadelphia Orchestra and Carnegie Hall pre-school concert series. She has been a featured storyteller at many storytelling festivals throughout North America, and has been a featured artist at both the Presidential Inaugural Festivities in Washington, DC and the Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Children's Inaugural Celebrations in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Charlotte also performs with her brother, jazz musician John L. Blake. Their program explores the role stringed instruments play in African and African-American culture. Charlotte appears in American Storyfeast, a unique concert celebrating each teller's culture through traditional and contemporary stories. She has collaborated with many instrumental ensembles and dance companies, and been a featured narrator for several orchestras. Her narrative voice can be heard on documentaries and on New York radio. Charlotte has received numerous honors and awards.