

Presenter: Dr. Jean E. Snyder



Bio: Dr. Jean E. Snyder's career as an English and Music teacher has included teaching English at Tumutumu Girls' Secondary School in Karatina, Kenya, and in Serenje, Zambia, where she established the music department at Malcolm Moffatt Teachers Training College. Her choir in Kenya sang for President Jomo Kenyatta, and her choir in Zambia sang for President Kenneth Kaunda. Jean entered her doctoral program at the University of Pittsburgh to pursue research on Zambian story songs, but after her marriage her focus shifted to the life and music of African American baritone, art song composer, music editor, and pioneer arranger of spirituals, Harry T. Burleigh, who was born in Erie, Pennsylvania. Jean's biography, "Harry T. Burleigh: From the Spiritual to the Harlem Renaissance," was published by the University of Illinois Press in 2016. While teaching at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania she served as Artistic Director for five weekend events honoring Burleigh, including the 2003 conference "The Heritage and Legacy of Harry T. Burleigh. She works closely with the Burleigh Legacy Alliance in Erie, which has planned major celebrations of Burleigh's life and work, beginning with Burleigh Day in Erie, December 2nd, 2019, Burleigh's 153rd birthday, and continuing through Burleigh Week. BLA plans events for secondary music students and the public and prepared unveiling of an updated historical marker. Jean also served as the 2019-2020 inaugural Historian in Residence by the Harry T. Burleigh Society of New York City.