



# COMPOSER SPOTLIGHT



## VALERIE CAPERS

b. 1935



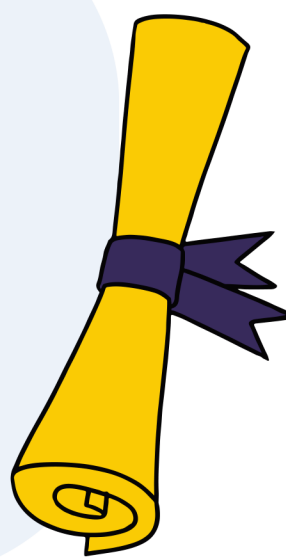
Fats Waller, famous jazz pianist and composer

### Early Life

Valerie Capers was born in New York City to musical parents who exposed her to classical and jazz music. Her father was a good friend of Fats Waller! An illness left her blind at the age of six, and she attended the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind where she learned how to read Braille music.

### Music Training and Academia

She was the first blind graduate of the Julliard School. After graduation, she had trouble finding teaching jobs since many schools at the time were unwilling to hire a blind person. She eventually held teaching positions at the Brooklyn and Manhattan Schools of Music and Bronx Community College. She developed a jazz program at the Manhattan School.



### Awards

Capers has been a recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts and was also the first recipient of *Essence* magazine's "Women of Essence Award for Music," where she was honored alongside other notable black women, including Oprah Winfrey.

### Significant Works

- *Sing About Love*, Christmas cantata
- *Song of the Seasons*, song cycle
- *Sojourner*, "operatorio" on Sojourner Truth
- *Portraits in Jazz* for intermediate piano

