William Grant Still
Three Visions for Piano Solo

William Grant Still, an accomplished composer and trail blazer, was born in Mississippi to musical and scholarly parents of African-American, Native American, Spanish, Irish, and Scotch descent. After attending Wilberforce University, Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and the New England Conservatory of Music, Still became the first African-American to conduct a major U.S. symphony orchestra (Los Angeles Philharmonic, 1936) and have an opera produced by a major U.S. company (City Opera of New York, 1949). He wrote over 150 compositions in multiple genres, including opera, ballet, symphony, and chamber music.

Three Visions is a piano suite Still wrote for his wife, who premiered it in Los Angeles in 1936. The "visions" are three strongly contrasted moods. "Dark Horsemen" is one of horror, with horse's hooves beating and shrieks of anguish. "Summerland" portrays the promised beauty of the afterlife, "Radiant Pinnacle" is a vision of aspiration that is ever-climbing. Its continuous rhythmic flow and unresolved final cadence create the impression that there is more to come and the last word has not been said.