

77TH SEASON OF

CONCERTS

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART | NOVEMBER 4, 2018



PROGRAM

Flophouse Crew

Nolan Williams, Jr., conductor

Celebrating *Gordon Parks: The New Tide, Early Work 1940–1950*

Music by Gordon Roger Alexander Buchanan Parks (1912–2006)

November 4, 2018 | 4:00

East Building Auditorium

Musical excerpts from the film *Solomon Northup's Odyssey* (1984)*†

Selected movements from *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (1953)‡†

Announcement

Episode

Nocturne

Prelude and fugue

The Learning Tree†§

Selected movements from the ballet *Martin* (1989)*†

Allegro Maestoso

Letter to the World

Entr'acte

Letter from Birmingham Jail

From the film *Shaft*

“Don't Misunderstand” (1972)§†

* Transcribed and orchestrated by Kermit Moore

† Arranged by Scott Silbert

‡ Orchestrated by Henry Brant

§ Transcribed by Scott Silbert

MUSICIANS | COMPOSERS

Flophouse Crew | Ensemble

Flophouse Crew is an assembly of local freelance musicians whose mission is to research, cultivate, and preserve the historical, cultural, and ethnic diversity in music. Our goal is to foster an audience of concert attendants who hunger for the unusual and the unknown, eclectic, and academic. We are pleased to showcase some of the works of the modern Renaissance man, Gordon Parks. We want to thank the Gordon Parks Foundation, the Library of Congress, Philip Brookman, curator of the National Gallery of Art's exhibition *Gordon Parks: The New Tide, Early Work 1940–1950*, and the Wichita State University Special Collections in aiding in the accrual and permission to perform and project on a screen these timeless and valuable works of art.

Scott Silbert | Arranger

Scott Silbert arranged all of Gordon Parks's works in today's concert. As an arranger, Silbert adapts musical scores for specific ensembles. Born in Philadelphia, he is also a woodwind player and served as the United States Navy Band's chief arranger until his retirement in 2017. He is currently an active musician and arranger with the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra and has performed and arranged music for James Taylor, Stevie Wonder, Tony Bennett, Michael Buble, Gloria Estefan, and Josh Groban, among others.

Gordon Parks | Composer

Gordon Parks was an American photographer, musician, composer, writer, poet, and film director, who gained prominence in documentary photojournalism from the 1940s through the 1970s, particularly in the areas of civil rights, poverty, and African American life. He also worked in glamour photography.

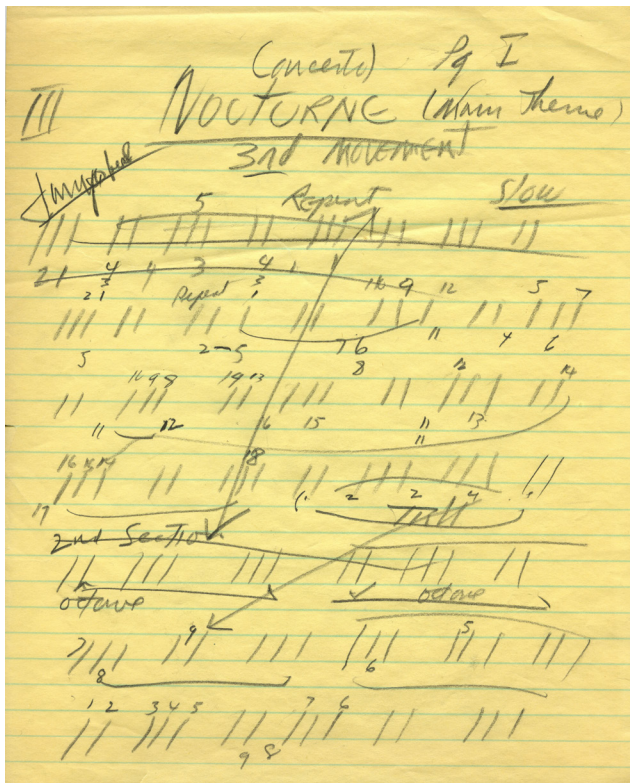
As the first famous pioneer among African American filmmakers, Parks produced and directed major motion pictures that shared the experience of America's enslaved people and the continuing struggle of African Americans. He pioneered the “blaxploitation” genre and is best remembered for his photos of poor Americans taken during a fellowship with the Farm Security Administration in the 1940s, as well as for his *Life* magazine photographic essays and his directing of television and film productions that include *Shaft* (1972).

Parks was born in Fort Scott, Kansas, the son of Sarah (née Ross) and Jackson Parks, a farmer. When he was fourteen, Gordon's mother died, and soon after he was sent to St. Paul, Minnesota, to live with a sister and her husband. Disagreement ensued and at age fifteen Parks was turned out on the street to fend for himself. Struggling to survive, he worked in brothels and also as a singer, piano player, busboy, traveling waiter,

and semipro basketball player. Later, he jumped a train to Chicago where he landed a job in a flophouse, an extremely sparse and inexpensive hostel.

Similar to Brahms and Debussy, Parks's first job as a teenager was as a piano player in a brothel. He quickly learned the popular jazz medium of the day. In 1929, he briefly worked in the Minnesota Club, where he met and performed with band leader Larry Funk. Although the Depression brought an end to the club, Parks's song "No Love" was performed during a national radio broadcast by Funk and his orchestra in the early 1930s.

Parks learned piano by rote and could not read or write music in conventional musical notation. He created his own tablature to capture his musical works on paper. He relied on the help of composers and arrangers—who transcribed from his personal taped recordings on the piano and his tablature—to orchestrate and arrange his music for professional musicians to perform and record.



Gordon Parks, composition notes from *Nocturne (Main Theme)*. Courtesy Gordon Parks Foundation

PROGRAM NOTES

The PBS television film *Solomon Northup's Odyssey* aired in 1984 and was both directed and musically scored by Parks. Based on the autobiography *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup, the film featured the story of a free black man who in 1841 was kidnapped and sold into slavery. The impact of Parks's musical score was skillfully developed by Kermit Moore, an outstanding African American cellist, conductor, composer, teacher, and mentor. Through his broad talents in music, Moore succeeded in breaking down the racial barriers of his generation. His early studies were at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and at age nineteen he became a member of the Cleveland Orchestra. He continued his studies at the Paris Conservatory with the legendary composer and pedagogue Nadia Boulanger. Living and performing in Europe, he soloed with and conducted major orchestras. In 1961, Moore returned to the States to teach, compose, conduct, and perform with the New York Philharmonic, Jazz legend Dizzy Gillespie, and violin virtuoso Ruggiero Ricci. He founded the Symphony of the New World, which actively fosters minority artists.

The excerpts featured on today's program are cues from the film's soundtrack and include original music written to accompany specific scenes. These musical cues aimed to enhance the dramatic narrative and actively underscore the intended emotional impact. To fuse the music with the video, the music was first recorded by an ensemble of musicians, and then "burned" (synchronized) onto a time code with the previously filmed material.

Parks composed *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* at the encouragement of African American conductor Charles Dean Dixon and his wife Vivian Rivkin, a pianist. Dixon was of West Indian descent and attended the Juilliard School in 1932 and Columbia University in 1939. He was the first person to establish a racially integrated orchestra in New York City. His career as an accomplished conductor began with concerts for the New York City Orchestra, the NBC Symphony, and the New York Philharmonic. Later he directed various French and German radio orchestras.

Parks composed his piano concerto with the help of the composer and orchestrator Henry Brant, who was America's foremost composer of acoustic spatial music. Born to American parents living in Montreal, Brant is widely recognized as a master orchestrator. He moved to New York in 1929, where he worked commercially in radio, film, ballet, and jazz. He completed orchestration projects for George Antheil, Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, Douglas Moore, and Gordon Parks. In 2002, Brant was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music.

The Learning Tree is a film adaptation of Parks's semi-autobiographical novel of the same name. It is set in the 1920s in the fictional town of Cherokee Flats, Kansas. Gifted in many artistic mediums, Parks helps his audience understand the feelings of

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Seventh Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin Concerts

Unless otherwise noted, concerts are held in the West Building, West Garden Court.

Tapestry

Lessons of Darkness: Armistice Day 1918

November 11, 3:30

Nobuntu

Featuring traditional Zimbabwean songs, Afro jazz, and gospel

November 18, 3:30

Carolina Eyck + American Contemporary Music Ensemble

Fantasias

December 2, 3:30

Caroling in the Rotunda

U.S. Army Chorus

MSG Jason Gottshall, conductor

West Building Rotunda

December 8, 1:30 and 2:30

Caroling in the Rotunda

Encore Chorale

Jeanne Kelly, director

West Building Rotunda

December 9, 1:30 and 2:30

Mettis String Quartet

With Gabrielius Alekna, piano

Presented in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania

December 9, 3:30

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

The department of music produced these program notes. Copyright © 2018 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Cover Gordon Parks, *Self-Portrait*, 1941, Private Collection, Courtesy of and copyright The Gordon Parks Foundation